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SERMONS

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"WHERE ARE THE NINE?"[1]

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."—ST. LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

THERE, in front of the Lord, with his face on the ground, lies, lost in the glory of thanksgiving, the solitary stranger who had been healed of his disease. We are told how the praises came pouring from his lips; his eyes are brimming with tears, his hands are holding the feet of his Deliverer, his whole soul is going out in adoration. Just think of it! It is all really true! That long woe of his has slipped from off him, it has been rolled away, as a stone that has been sunk into the deep sea, never to be seen again. That woe of leprosy had been his daily companion; day and night it had clothed him with a visible curse, it had marked him out from his fellows so that all might know. There was no escape, no pause, no secrecy, no relief; it rose with him each morning, it dogged him through the day, it lay down with him at night. The ring round him that set him apart might never be broken; he could not cross over to his friends, nor they to him. And the curse was no arbitrary mark; it was imbedded in his flesh, it ate its way into his bones. We have all lately learned to taste again, as it were, the bitterness of that leper's cup, as this unity of sympathy which begins to bind the world together brings us into touch with the disease, so long banished from our own coasts, in islands over the sea which the artist and the writer have brought home to our imagination as vividly as if they were a scene here in England; and as we hear of the loath-

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 7th, being the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.

some horror with which the disease devours face and feet and hands, we can measure a little better the thrill of that poor Samaritan's thanks, we understand why he is shouting his praises with that loud voice which all might hear. The thing has gone from him, and gone for ever, it has become like a dream when one awaketh, and therefore his mouth is filled with laughter and his tongue with joy. He cannot restrain himself, he can hold back nothing; he can but cast himself down in the very dust on his face at the feet of Him whose words, said so quietly and so surely, had broken the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron asunder.

So he lies, and Jesus looks at him with the joy with which the Father who is in heaven looks on one sinner that repenteth. Though it be but one, but one small coin of the ten is found, but one stray lamb of all the ninety and nine is recovered, yet there is joy breaking out in heaven, the joy that over-brims the Father's heart, even as that poor leper's thanks over-brimmed his,—a joy that in heaven too cannot bear to live to itself alone, but calls the friends and neighbours to rejoice because this one piece has been found, this one sheep brought home again. Such the joy that broke out from the heart of Jesus over the one stranger that returned to give glory to God! Rejoice with Me, O ye angels of God; at least one is here, at least one has remembered. And yet we read in my text how that joy holds in itself the spring of tears. The very sight of that glad heart giving out its thanks and praises can but deepen the regret that there are not more to share it. Just look at the healed man. Could there be greater happiness than that which he experiences as he lifts up his voice aloud and glorifies God? Who would not envy him? who would not give all he has to taste such gladness? Why then is it left to him to feel it? Why should he be alone? Why will not men come to such living waters and drink? How is it that so many miss their chance? Why do nine in every ten rob themselves of it? And the Lord's joy

too in welcoming him, the Lord's joy in listening to the thanks that are going up to the glory of the Father which is in heaven, that heavenly joy of angels round a rescued soul—why is that so rare? Why is the Father denied it? why have the friends and neighbours so seldom to be summoned? Can there be a more deep and more passionate joy than that which passes between the God who recovers His own again and the soul that finds its God? To make such joy possible Jesus came on the earth, and stooped to the Virgin's womb, and bowed Himself to the shame, and bent Himself to the cross. Just that such joy as that might spring out in the wilderness of man's exile like waters in the desert, just to set loose this fountain of joy in the high heart of heaven, just for that He died, and died that all might taste it, that all might drink: "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the sweet waters; come and drink without money and without price." He did it that none might die, but that all might come to repentance. Why then so few, why only this one kneeling at His feet? Where are the others? where are the nine?

Where are the nine? The question, with its unanswered complaint, finds a sorrowful echo in the heart of all human success. Those successes of men, those triumphs that they win, what are they? At the best they are but faint and partial suggestions of what might have been, of what men might have done. In the achievements of earth's heroes we catch a glimpse of all the possibilities that might have been open to us. We see how this or that solitary man has pushed steadily on, has clung fast to his ideal, has followed his vision, has never lost heart or patience or hope, has beaten up against scorn and neglect and mockery, and the weight of public selfishness and the clamour of bad men. Against it he simply persisted, and worked, and refused to go under, and forgot to despair. And at last the victory breaks out, the day is won, a new good is possessed by men, a new level is touched, a vast evil is pushed away, and the hero is greeted

with cheers, and every voice is now at last singing his praises; his claim is accepted, his hope approved. And it all looks now so obviously right, that which before we so bitterly opposed, or so timidly suspected. The whole big world swings round to his side; and through all the loud praises that we outpour, the still small voice is asking deep down in our souls, sometimes unattended to, but always persisting: "Why is that man whom you all are applauding, why is he alone? why should not others do what he has done? why are there not more like him?" All can see, now that it is over, how easy it would have been to have stood by him, how simple was the duty demanded—just the duty of believing in what he knew to be right. How open to all men it was who would have just had the courage to trust in God and go forward! Any one of us, who are content to shout his praises, might have shared in his task, might now be a partaker of his glory. It was only sluggishness, and blindness, and indolence, and fainthearted-ness, that stopped us. How the thought stings, for instance, as we read, in this or that life, of the devotion of some plain, firm, patient man, without any very remarkable gifts perhaps—some Mackonochie, some Lowder! Look what he did; look how he built up a new standard of priestly work, how he broke down prejudice, how he lifted the cloud of sin, how he showed fresh capabilities of ministry amid the suffering and the poor, how a whole city was stirred! And any one, any one who has surrendered heart and soul to God, could do what he did. Any one who was unshrinkingly loyal to Jesus could do as much, and more. Why, why is there not many another priest striving with like perseverance, fed by the same invisible food? Each recorded life that we read wakes up the one pathetic question, as we sadly turn the last page and let the book drop from our eyes, "Why only this one? why are not all of us such as he was? where are the nine?"

And it is not only we, outside, who look on human achieve-ments, who make that sorrowful inquiry. He too, the hero,

the man who has achieved, he too, within, is beset with the same question. He hears now the praises loud in his ears; but his eyes too will be full of tears, for, indeed, that which he has accomplished is but such a tiny part of that which he designed. He has done something, but, alas! he has dropped much more; he has marred much with his blunders, he has sacrificed much to expediency, and it is but the fragment of his early vision to which he has been faithful, and even that fragment is not what it might have been, not what God meant it to be. He still sees the outline of that pattern shown him in the mount, and contrasts with it this pitiful and obscure caricature which is the object of such fervid praises. Ah! those praises, that brimming gratitude, they sting him with reproaches. If the world is so deeply thankful for a little, why did he not give it more? why did he not trust the vision with more loyalty? why did he lower his aims? It was because he doubted of ever winning the world to his side. And now these present praises are the proofs of how easy it was to win that world after all, how ready would be its gratitude. It once looked black and forbidding enough, in the old days when his heart failed him and he relinquished his best hopes; but now it is clear how quick and how willing it would have been to yield to his pressure, to pass over to his side, to overwhelm him with its thanks. But why then did he not be firm? why had he ever retreated from his earlier plans? The triumph about him, the flying flags, the blowing trumpets, the pealing bells, seem to him now but as taunts at his cowardice, as humiliating reproaches for all that he has lost by the way.

"After all, you see, it could have been done! They would all have come round"—so the shouting voices seem to be whispering in his ears. The little something that has won him so much honour does but remind him the more of the much that has never been done, that has been forfeited, and has gone. It could have been, why is it not there? The sorrow that fills his eyes with those tears of humiliation comes to him

from Jesus, who is standing before him, in the very thick of his thanksgivings, and is asking of him still, "Where are the nine?"

The greater the man the sharper always has been the probing force of that question, and therefore none have felt its sting more acutely than the saints of God. It is the secret of those bitter self-reproaches with which they have so often surprised us in their prayers and their confessions: it is the key to their incomprehensible humility. We can hardly believe that such humility can be genuine in those whose whole life seems to us to have been a living boon to men, and a beautiful witness to God. How is it that they can escape seeing what blessings they carry with them wherever they pass, what power for good they wield for all who come under their sway? What can they mean by this sense of shameful failure, and the severity of this trembling penitence? So we wonder. But they see with other eyes. As the Lord looked out beyond the outpoured praise of the poor Samaritan, and thought with reproachful pity of those others who were not partakers in that joy, so the saints, as they at this or that point of their lives —rare point!—succeed in bringing themselves into perfect touch with the wonder-working forces of God, as they discover the splendour and the riches of Divine grace which responds to that touch, how it pours out its abundance down the tiny channels which they have laid open, how it burns to get forward through every door that they have not barred, how it lifts and transfigures and expands and multiplies every fragment of those poor five barley loaves which are all they have ever offered it, as they learn to measure all this by the experience of that marvellous power that has gone out through them to others whenever they have not been hopelessly disloyal to its demands, they are shaken with a terrible anguish at the apprehension of all that could have happened if their loyalty had been a little less hampered, if they had been a little more true to God with all their gifts and faculties in the measure in which they have been true to Him with this or that.

They have, they see now, put out perhaps one of their five or ten talents to use in His service; and just see what He has done with them, just count the reward! If they had been as faithful with the other four, or the other nine! And so, as they lie at Jesus' feet praising God for all His mercies, their sad hearts go back over the past to review all the lost hours which might have been as blessed as is this present hour, all the wasted opportunities that have missed for ever their meed of praise, all the despised and neglected days which might have been illuminated with some such supreme glory as this which now is theirs, days that have passed long ago into the cold shadow of that night when no man can work, days that have missed their crown and died unredeemed, unhallowed, misused, and can never now be recalled. Oh the bitterness of that review which the present joy does but intensify by its pitiful contrast! Where are they all gone, those perished hours, those wasted opportunities? One had been saved, but where are the rest? where are the nine?

My brethren, the question suggests one obvious practical corrective of a misjudgment to which we are all too prone. We look upon those who are called saints as splendid exceptions to man's normal and natural standard; we speak of them as lifted supernaturally beyond the ordinary limitations, strange and isolated phenomena standing apart, wonderful, selected from the mass, set aside by God's grace, carried out of the line of human possibilities; and, so thinking, we easily learn to sigh gently over our own inferiority, and to acquiesce in the reflection that we cannot all be saints, that it is not given to us, it is our fate to be on the humdrum average level, one of those who make no claim to exceptional privileges or unique endowments. Now what is all this but to accept sin as the normal nature of man? The average standard reached by the main mass of ordinary men is the result of the wide, hereditary, persistent infusion of sin into our history—so Christianity asserts; and, if we believe this at all, we must hold that man

in general is below his natural level, that his average attainment is unnaturally low, that it in no sense represents his normal growth, gives us no fit measure of what he ought to be, and of how much he ought to find it possible to do. Our Lord, as He looks upon that solitary stranger who found his way back to His feet and gave thanks, does not deem him as a phenomenal, supernatural surprise, rising above the ordinary demands; He does not suggest that here is something to which a few only can be called. Rather it seems to Him that here is the one man who has done that which is obviously right and fit and natural for men to do. Ten had been healed, why should not the whole ten have done as much as this one? Why should he alone come up to the level which all might have been expected to attain? Why should the others have dropped below that normal scale? Where are the nine? And so the men and women whom we call saints ought to kindle in us a like inquiry. It is they who exhibit human nature in its normal and natural condition, untainted so far by sin. In them we see a little what it would be for us to be in health, to be sound; we see what our development might have been if we had not been disorganized; we learn what it is we all have missed. Each saint robed in his transfiguring glory, so surpassing, so hopelessly remote, does but reveal how far below our nature we have sunk; he does but show what man is meant to be,—the man who does not obstruct God. And that is why we see each saint is so humble, for no one is ever proud of doing that which it is his nature to do. No one is proud of being able to see, or feel, or taste: no more can the saint recognise any personal merit in his saintliness. It is but what every one would do and be, if he would but trust himself to God, to the natural emotions. How can they then be proud? how can they feel it a merit? Nay, they cannot see anything wonderful in it at all: their only wonder is, why all are not the same, why all are not even as they. "Where are the rest of you?" they are asking; "where are the nine?"

Surely it would make a real practical difference in our daily conduct if we recognised this; surely it would shake a little our contented acquiescence if we honestly took the saints as plain illustrations and evidences of man's natural condition in Christ. They would not then be to us far away visions through painted windows of a life in which we have no part or lot; they would then stand by our side as living friends, stinging us again by this terrible reproach of their presence. "There they are," we should say, "the saints of God: we see them, feel them, cast at the feet of Jesus, with loud voice, before all the world, giving thanks and praising and glorifying God,—there they are in their joy and in their beauty; and where then are we? Have we not been healed? have we not gone to the priests, and found as we went that our leprosy had dropped from us? have we not been brought within all the powers of grace which those brave saints of God have tasted and enjoyed? What have they had that it is not ours to have? Why, then, do we not lie with them at Jesus' feet? Why have we not courage to turn and acknowledge our Redeemer, and with loud voice before all our fellow men give Him glory and thanksgiving?"

Beloved, it is we, let us remember, we who are dimming the gladness of Jesus as He welcomes home His saints. Those faithful ones, so few and far between, do but remind Him of all those who are absent. It is we whom He misses, whom He looks for and cannot see. Where are we? Let each one of us repeat over to his own soul the anxious inquiry of his Master: "Where are those others who have been cured of their plague? where are the nine? where am I? O my soul, where art thou? in what dull background art thou lingering? through what dark alleys of faith art thou creeping? why art thou afraid to come out into the day and show thyself and let thy faith be seen abroad? why art thou withholding thy proper praise? why art thou lost in the dumb crowd? why art thou content to accept this wonderful gift of God's salvation, and

yet never to make thy life a pledge of thy gratitude, a loud and living witness of thy thanksgiving? why hast thou nothing to bring to Jesus? why no outburst of love, no glow of gratitude? why is thy heart in fetters and thy tongue tied?—why is it?" May God enable us to ask that question, now in this day, while yet there is time for us all, who know that we have been healed, to turn again and to find Jesus in our midst, and to enter into the joy of those who give glory to God!

THE UNTHANKFUL NINE.[1]

"And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger."—ST. LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

WILL you forgive me if once again I venture to bring before you the case of these unhappy nine?—for indeed they have much to suggest which is of peculiar importance to most of us who fill the churches, so that I cannot but think that it may be worth our while to dwell on the story yet further. For what is the special touch of sorrow that belongs to the absence of the nine? It is not the sorrow that is kindled by the positive sight of sin. That sight distresses and appals us as we note its immense volume, its depth, its vigour, its cruelty, and its horror. But then there is always a way of relief open to us by which we can ease our disgust and distress. We can always nurse the hope that Christ has made for ever possible, the hope for the sinner that some day he will see it all in its baseness and its depravity; some day he will turn and repent; it is impossible for him surely to go on to the bitter end in this detestable fashion. The very violence of his wickedness may often give hope of as violent a reaction. He will recoil,

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 28th, being the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.

he will remember himself; there will come a day when the prodigal will find himself amid the swine, when his sin will have nothing but husks to offer him, when he will look up from the far country and recall the pleasant faces of his father's home. So there is always hope. No sinner, since Christ came and died, can ever seem to us as one who has come to the last stage of his career, he cannot present himself to our imagination even as one of whom the last word has been said, because always we shall dream of the sharp corner that he has yet to turn, when his eyes will be opened, and he will remember, and will understand, and will confess, and will be recovered. So we plead, so we pray; in face of the positive and plain sin of the world, we retain hope.

But in the absent nine we have brought before us a sight that has about it a sorrow that is charged with a profounder depression, because it is so hopeless. It is the depression of disappointment at the dwarfed and meagre efforts of the saved. Here are these nine. For them the good day has already arrived, the very best day that will ever come to them in their lives. The last card has been played, the uttermost change that life can bring for them has come. They have tasted all the bitterness of the outcast and the disgraced; they have known what it was to live year after year under the very shadow of death; they have sent up the wail of the forlorn who know but one passion, the passion for relief from a burden too heavy for man to bear; they have known all that is in the cry, "Have mercy upon us and heal us!" and they have known then the unutterable joy, beyond all they had ever dreamed, the joy of becoming conscious that in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the curse had slipped from off them, the horror had vanished away, and once again their flesh had become as the flesh of a little child, and they were new men, welcomed home in the blessed companionship of their fellows, free to pass in and out of the happy ways of men unstricken and unashamed. They had known all this, all the wonder of

a miraculous deliverance, and if at such a moment as that they are not kindled, what indeed will ever do it? And yet, after all, how coldly they took it, how disappointing, how flat, how small and common! They went their way to the priests no doubt, they were obedient to the direction given them,—in fact, they perhaps clung faster to the commands laid upon them by their Healer and Saviour than did he, the Samaritan, who returned to give thanks. "Go, show yourselves to the priests." That is what He had said. Quite right. Would they not have argued that they could not let their own emotional gratitude over-ride that clear direction of His? No such authority could belong to a mere rush of ecstatic feeling. Grateful, no doubt, they were; but would not gratitude show itself more loyal by following the will of Him who was its object? Would He not Himself be far more satisfied with them if they, finding themselves healed in the way, set themselves patiently to fulfil His instructions? His command stood exactly where it did as when He said it, and they were as much bound as ever. All this they would so judiciously and reasonably have pleaded as they left their one enthusiastic companion to hurry back in his irregular and uncontrollable excitement, disregarding his Master's words, burning only to give out his thanks to God in a loud voice before everybody, while they themselves steadily trod the road down to the priests which they had been told to go, and felt sure that the best thing to be done under the circumstances must lie in fulfilling all that was obviously required of them; time enough for returning their thanks when that is done!

Is there not plausibility in that? is not that good common sense? If our Lord had not said anything, would not some of us have imagined they were perfectly justified? And yet our Lord did speak, and we know exactly what He thought of it. And, as He spoke, we seem to catch in His tones the pathos of this disappointment to which I have called your attention, the pathos of His disappointment in those who have found

Him, who have come within His healing work, who have tasted the sweet savour of His regenerating gift. After all, will no more come of it than that? Will that be the supreme response then that the redeemed will consider sufficient? No more than that—just to follow out His instructions, just to fulfil the bare duty required of them! Will it never strike them that it might be well to go a little beyond that? Would no instinct of their own experience prompt them to some spontaneous act of devotion? Would they never then feel the prickings of the Spirit spurring them to some greater motives? Would they never yield themselves to the glow of inspiration? How poor, how melancholy, how strange, how inexplicable! He does not give orders that people whom He heals should bring their proper thanks. The thanks He looks for are those which must come unordered in order for them to be thanks at all; not that He requires thanks and praises, but it is the Father of whom He is thinking: "There are not found that returned to give glory to God the Father, save this one." He, the Son, had come down from heaven to reveal the heart of the Father for His children, and we know well what a father would feel whose children had no free instincts of glad response to his goodness. Surely He would not have to tell them how to thank Him! Surely they will themselves understand how to give back love for love! An earthly father needs indeed no presents from his children, the very money with which they are bought is probably his own; but yet it is delicious to him to be surprised by them with some tender little gift that they have got ready for him. They themselves have thought of it, they have planned it: that is the whole secret of the joy. He never asked them for it, but they have instinctively felt, and foresaw, how he would like it; and the fact that they did so foresee is the evidence to him of the cordial, co-operating communion of affection which knits them in one. And if this is so with us who are evil, how much more with the Lord Jesus! He, possessed of the Father's compassion and love

for the children of men, anticipates this natural communion of hearts, He entrusts Himself to them, relying that the child-heart will respond to the working of the spirit that cries from within, "Abba, Father!" He demands nothing at their hands, but surely they will not fail to have an instinctive sense of what it would delight a father to receive from his children! He looks for this, because love must look for its own natural reflection. True, He will work on their behalf with equal loyalty, whether they bring Him the return or no. He will suffer and die for them, though they deny Him the travail of His soul; but the work will then be done in a grimmer and sadder fashion. It will be hindered by that chiller atmosphere; it will sorrowfully miss the glow and gladness of being met and greeted by the responsive intelligence of spontaneous affection; it will go about its work, but below, in the secret places of its heart, love will have that question kept down in hiding: "Where are the nine?"

There is one other most beautiful scene recorded in the gospels in which we are allowed, as here with the lepers, to see into the silent pathos which lay behind so much of the work that our Lord did on earth for man, the pathos of missing what He would not ask for, but yet would most surely anticipate. He was sitting in Simon's house, the Pharisee who had the good courage to ask Him to dine with him. Simon was conscious that he had done a good deed. He could flatter himself that few would have risked so much as he for this new Teacher, and the great Rabbi Himself seemed contented, and all was going very smoothly. There was no sign or hint given that anything more could be looked for, only unfortunately the Pharisee's complacency was upset we know by the passionate and extravagant fervour of a woman, once an open sinner, who, with an excess of devotion, had laid herself at the very feet of the Rabbi, that she might wash them with her tears and dry them with her hair. Simon could not restrain his sense of the impropriety of this, and somehow his

rebuking word opened a fount that had hitherto been sealed in the Lord's heart. He thought it well to take Simon's challenge, and to fling it back by a counter-rebuke. What had Simon been about all this time? He was pleased enough with what he had done, and the Lord had left him silently to enjoy his pleasure; but, now that he has forced the inquiry, it is necessary to speak out, and, lo! this silent Guest, whom he had thought it sufficient to ask to his table, had, it would appear, been missing point after point of delicate attention. He seemed to ask for so little, to be so humble, and patient, and unassuming. Perfectly true, so He was; but yet, if Simon is determined to know all, then let him understand that within that quiet spirit every omission had been noted of those instinctive courtesies which would have evidenced the impulse of honour and of love. It is just these which the poor sinning woman has had the impulse and the instinct to give Him; the beautiful, abundant acts of supererogation; the acts that stream out of a full heart, brimming over with uncontrollable love; the acts that are inwardly prompted by the pressure of a child's tender simplicity, longing in all manner of ways to testify to its adoring affection. These acts are those which He had missed in His host, and found in the sinner who had crept into the house under the cloud of her shame, and these acts, these undemanded and unsuggested acts, are, it appears, those in which His innermost being most delights. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on." And He said: "I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed My feet with ointment." There is the Master's heart thrown open to us. We are allowed to feel the full force of that yearning love which so longed for this response of an unstinted and un-

calculated affection. This is the response which He did win from publican and harlot; this was the especial response which He so rarely found, and so sadly missed, in the main mass of the righteous and the devout.

It is just this peculiar response that He is missing in the nine lepers. Here are men who might indeed be expected to give it,—not "righteous needing no repentance," but men healed, all of them, from a recognised curse; and yet nine out of the ten cannot even perceive that anything is missing, cannot think that there is anything further for them to do at all, and the question seems to rise perhaps before the Lord, Will it always be so? As His redemptive work spreads over the earth, as century after century His word still strives against sin, cleansing from this leprous horror, of the men who stand in the road afar off and cry for mercy, will nine out of every ten still be too sluggish to understand, too stupid to turn and give Him back that love for love? Will He always have to silently miss the little acts that would mean so much? The words that spring unsolicited, undictated, from a glowing heart are an evidence and pledge of so much more than can ever be done or said. Will there always, through all the long years, be so few who will ever go beyond the common, stereotyped, conventional limits of what is just sufficient, and no more; so few who will pour the water over His feet, and give Him the kiss, and the oil upon His head? Will it indeed be so that only one in ten will ever in the first hour of his healing think it worth while to do more than carefully obey orders? will He ever have to ask, "Where are the nine? what are they about?" It seems to them a little thing perhaps He misses; but it means, we see, so much, for its absence signifies—what? Signifies that the Lord has been misunderstood, that His desire for communion of heart with heart, with those whom He has saved, has never been detected; it means, this absence means, that the freedom of spirit which should be the heritage of the redeemed has been choked and obstructed: for if the spirit

that is crying within, "Abba, Father!" were allowed to speak, would it not compel them to stop and remember? What are they about, those nine, going so quietly down to the priest that they do not feel within them the promptings of this spirit that is surely urging them even now with passion to turn back and give glory to God at the feet of Him who has redeemed them?

My brethren, surely the question does hit us hard. We who are within the Church are so apt to suppose that the great problem which Christian apology, for instance, has to face is how and why such thousands are left outside the line of grace, unpersuaded and unredeemed; why is there such a mass of sin untouched by the cross of Christ? why is there a wild world of intellectual doubt which God leaves apparently to work out its way undirected? Such perplexity as this greatly distresses us, and we spend our strength perhaps in earnest attempts to clear God's honour of the reproach which appears to be cast upon it by the lack of universality in His victory. But those outside whom we long to convert have remained unpersuaded—for why? Because they have quite another perplexity than ours. For them it is *we* who are the problem, we who are inside. "Why," they are asking, "why are they so poor and sluggish, and so cold?" That is what they cannot understand; that is what they consider requires the most urgent explanation; that is what holds them back from believing. They look on at us who claim to know the secret, to have experienced deliverance, to have passed out of the nightmare of leprosy into the kindly blessing of the new day; they look on at us, and they wonder why so little joy breaks out from our liberated hearts, why our lips have no praises and our voices no songs, why we travel so very calmly down the beaten roads of conventional worship, and never seem moved by any imperious impulse to cast ourselves down at Jesus' feet and give loud glory to God. They see us plodding along the road from day to day, chilly and moderate, as those cold-blooded

nine went obediently on the way ordered to the priests, and never dreamed of doing more. They observe us satisfied with ourselves for keeping so carefully to regulations and commands, and they keep on asking themselves, "Is this all it comes to then, this magnificent promise of redemption and the eternal hope set before us of the new creation of all things in heaven and earth? is this all that those who experience it can make of it? Where is the inspiration, where is the fire, where is the freedom, where is the love, where is the passion of self-sacrifice? These should be the notes of those who believe in Christ; where are they, these signs of the Son of man? If Christ means anything at all, He must mean much more than the regular mass of His worshippers seem to suspect or discover. As it is, we will take their practical testimony of what they find faith to be as against the rapturous language in which the promises are couched." That is what men are saying all about London as they look at us, that is their real argument against belief, that is for them a perplexity which hides the face of God. The weight of the counter-evidence offered by the nine over-balances the witness to them of the one who here and there is pouring out his thanks. "Ah! yes, that one," men say; "but then he is mad, or he is peculiar; he attributes to God that which is due to physical excitement or to an exceptional temperament. We judge by the mass, not by the exception; and look at the nine."

Dearly beloved, it is a matter for you and me to ask ourselves very seriously, do we do anything at all to meet and repel this criticism of those outside? It is not that we are so bad as they assume; we are inwardly sincere; all of it is true, we are cured, the leprosy is gone, Christ's word has been powerful to heal, and we are obeying Him,—all this is perfectly right; but still, is the issue of it all that we remain still among the nine, that we "hang fire," so to speak, that we are so obviously disappointing as Christians, that nothing very decisive comes from it in us, that we produce no effect whatever on those out-

side, who cannot recognise in us the glow which faith in a compassionate Father and in Jesus Christ our Redeemer and our King is bound to create?—is that so? Let us ask ourselves, and let us ask it, too, not only in view of those outside, those critics who are thrown back by what they observe us to be, but far more, ask it because of Jesus Christ Himself, in whose gladness over the one leper, in whose praise of the woman who was a sinner, we learn how deeply He values, how warmly He welcomes, something that goes beyond the mere command, the plain necessities, something that breaks out in freedom from the child-impulses that prompt the heart within, something over and above the commercial due, something that proves the delicate eagerness of affectionate devotion, that instinctively offers all that it can freely bring in His honour. Think of the patient silence in which He is noting down of us, as He did of Simon the Pharisee, the little attentions we are omitting. We are, perhaps, so pleased with ourselves at having asked Jesus Christ to be of our company, at having invited Him to our house; and nevertheless He is all the time silently missing the touch of a finer courtesy, the water that we have never brought for His feet, the oil we have somehow forgotten for His head, and the kiss that we never gave Him. For those tokens of compassionate love for which His tenderness craves, He has to go elsewhere: not from us will He get them, but from some poor sinning woman whom He has rescued from the streets, from some Samaritan stranger whose simple will obeys genuine impulses. Oh! and yet it would be such a joy and comfort to us all to let oneself go in some one little act of free surrender out of sheer love for Jesus, out of sheer thankfulness to God, some one little thing that is over and above our obvious duty, some one little pleasure surrendered, some one religious act undertaken, not because we must, not because it is plainly commanded, but because we want to make Jesus Christ a free gift, just because we, His children, want to see His face brighten and His smile break

out, as He sees what we have thought of doing for Him without being told, and without being bound. Is there not something for us all?—just that new little bit of prayer, of devotion, the fresh religious practice perhaps, that which we have so often thought of beginning in the morning or in the evening, and then in the day have found it looked so foolish and extravagant that our friends would be startled and amused. Could we not at least do that—just that one little step forward that would carry us beyond the regular routine of that dead level on which our life has been for so long; just that one direct, practical piece of good work for the help of the poor and the forlorn that we have so long postponed? might we not do it? Oh the comfort, the joy, of having any little real gift to bring to the Lord, of leaving behind us for once the nine to go their way, and of taking our stand with the one happy soul who is giving glory to God before the face of all people!

Dear brethren, it seems almost inhuman to end to-day without saying, at least, one short word of that which is in so many of our hearts at this moment. In this church, we know, a deed, a dreadful deed, was done this morning, a deed such as seems to cast a shadow over the very service that we offer to God here, over the very songs of seraphim and cherubim. We have nothing to do with judging that poor soul who was hurried in one moment out of our very midst into that unseen land of God. We know nothing of his trials or his temptations. We bow our heads, we leave him in the hands of God, who knows all the secrets of every heart, and is, above all things, always merciful and compassionate. But, for ourselves, we will at least walk a little more warily and humbly with our God, learning once more all the terror of the peril from which His good Spirit is daily preserving us. And, for this house, we will pray Him that He will once more fill it again with His glory, that our prayers may go up to Him that He would re-hallow and re-consecrate it fully for His service, that every stain may

be wiped out from it, that it may bear no memory of shame and of despair, but always may be full of comfort and of peace to all those souls, those weary, burdened souls, who enter in at its doors, may speak to them always of a God, long-suffering and of great kindness, who calls to Himself all those who are weary and heavy laden, that He may give them rest.

AN APOSTLE'S PRAYER.[1]

"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." —Eph. iii. 13–19.

There is a strange contrast in this text between the scene open to the outward and that to the inward eye. To the outward eye there is a lonely man in prison, a man broken before his time, and now marked with the pitiful witness of age; a man of delicate fibre and sensitive nerves, high-strung and passionate, and yet battered by wind and weather, by storm and hardship; a man bruised by affliction, wounded by disappointments, deserted and forlorn, dogged to his grave by a fierce and vindictive hostility; and round him his work is breaking, and his friends are falling away, and he is sinking fast toward the darkness of death. So it is with Paul the aged at Rome. And at Ephesus there is a Church that watches on for the dreaded end, waits and watches, sick with

[1] Sermon preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 14th, being the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.

fear. Every day may bring the worst tidings, and men's hearts are full of forebodings, and they creep from house to house, disheartened and alarmed; and in corners and in hiding-places they meet in knots, and their eyes are clouded, and their faces are stricken; there are mutterings and whisperings as they pass from one to the other, low, ominous, and dismal; and each, as he whispers his fears, deepens his own trouble, and each, as he listens to his own alarm coming back to him in another's forebodings, feels his own distress corroborated and multiplied. Such blows were threatening the Church, the foes were pressing in on every side, bad hours were drawing on apace, already the foe was beating at the door, suspicions were eating and gnawing within; and at such a moment, so big with fate, so black with disaster, he will be gone who alone could stay the flight and rally the timid, he who alone could give the high word of command, could master the stress of the storm, could quicken courage and promise hope—he will be gone, and over him, over his beaten and dead body, the attack will roll on with intensified fury, with yet louder confidence. How will they, his children of the faith, face the onset to which he had yielded his life?—they so weak, so nerveless, so impoverished, so incompetent, such babes in knowledge, how will they stand without a leader, orphaned and beggared? So they are muttering at Ephesus in the dim corners where they gather together. It is a Church that is faint, for their chief is in tribulation.

So it all looks to the outward eye; but within, what a contrast! Inside the room which is his cell, what is it that prisoner sees, and what is he doing? He is on his knees praying for the Church, and the one thing that he desires of God for it is that there should be none of this whispering, this foreboding of disaster, this faintheartedness, this sinking of the spirit, this trembling of the knees. This is the one thing he cannot tolerate in his children. This is to misinterpret everything, this is to falsify Christ. Against this he

bends himself to protest in prayer with all the energy of his being: "For this cause I bow my knees"; "I desire that ye faint not at my tribulation, which is your glory." Their glory! —that is what it means in God's sight. The hour of special tribulation is the very hour in which to look for special glory. "For this cause I bow my knees." For what cause? They poor things, are looking only to gathering troubles, for miserable losses, for bitter defeat; they are conscious of nothing wherewith to face the evil but craven hearts, and broken hopes, and demoralized ranks.

What is the experience which he anticipates for them? What does he see ahead for them in the dread hour which comes on so fast? What does he hope on their behalf during those days of his tribulation? As he prays there, bowing his knees, he, that weak, bruised, and broken prisoner, he looks through into that other world where all is ordered, and seemly, and strong, and calm, from end to end. There nothing is giving way, nothing is hindered or disturbed. There is no wild rout there, no failure. To that world he looks in which his very weakness is changed into strength, for there he is in sure and responsive touch with the source of all power, with the will that holds in it all dominion. He has hold of that power by prayer; he, that defenceless and stripped prisoner, can draw for his children's behalf on that supreme force which alone lends force to all that has any capacity to hold itself together, or to establish itself here on earth. He can liberate the power behind all powers, the will behind all wills; and so he prays to God the Father, the God after whom every fatherhood in earth is named, to the God of that wide and far-reaching efficacy which binds and knits in one all forms and fashions of human coherence. With Him is no disaster such as they dread, no ruinous undoing of His work. They are afraid lest He should be shattering the bonds that bind His own household, the Church, into one body; but St. Paul looks to see Him revealed just now as the

strong binder of all bonds of peace, as He who is ever drawing things together into consistency, as He who, wherever He shows Himself, gathers and scatters not, builds and does not pull down. Wherever there is companionship, brotherhood, or family, it is He who gives it its solidity, who supports it by joints and by bands. This is the God and Father whose unifying energy he looks to see exercised on behalf of this fainting Church. And he appeals to it by a yet dearer title—in the name of Jesus Christ, in whom He, the Father of all families, has put out all the force of coherence, in whom He has summed up all things, gathered up all men even into His body, which is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. How will God, whose very nature it is to bind families in one, ever suffer His supreme body to fall in pieces? To such a God he appeals, and in the power of that appeal he foresees, for those poor Ephesians, through this tribulation which has so terrified them, an upward growth of steady and unwavering increase. Up and up they are to pass, he tells them, step by step, higher and higher, with delightful and orderly sequence, in regulated and sure progression, lifted up flight after flight, up the graduated ascensions of the kingdom of law. Up and up they will pass, as they rise out of the lower ground of penitential deliverance from sin. This they will have left behind them, of this nothing now is said: all that drama of the soul's justification with which the apostle had so often passionately concerned himself, through which he had wrestled by the side of each suffering spirit as it was turned out of its old bad past and violently transplanted into the new hope. All this is now done and over in his vision, each soul is through it; and now the apostle only sees them climbing clear out of the dark valley of shadows, and mounting ever and on in a growing glory of grace upon grace. It is the great riches, abundant and overflowing, of this glory which he now hopes to see them occupying and assimilating. It is, first, might with which he foresees them strengthened, Divine

might, which shall displace faintness and annul fear, might impoured into the sources of their inner life by the incoming, inworking Spirit, who feeds and fortifies, who builds and gathers and nourishes, the Spirit of strength, who grasps, and and binds, and quickens, and concentrates, and sustains, and succours, and transfigures, and consoles. And still this is not all. Uplifted by the infused might of this Spirit, the Christ, in whom they already are, will be made to be also in them. Down He will pass, in He will enter, there He will lodge, if faith will admit Him ; and ever again He will enter, and ever He will arrive again, and ever faith will open, and ever all things will become new, and that which was true before will yet become truer and truer : "Christ shall dwell in your hearts by faith." And so a new vitality, a new solidity will come upon them ; they will drive their roots down deep into encompassing love, they will tie themselves into steady ground, they will be built on a rock which no storm will ever shake. And so rooted and grounded in love, their faculties will enlarge, will open out, will gain fibre and win amplitude ; their range of sight will grow steady, they will look no longer with eyes blurred with tears, but with the eyes of saints ; and, lo ! on every side, high and low, deep and broad, the eternal lines of the kingdom will start into the light, far into the vast purpose of God in Christ they will at last pierce, clearer and yet clearer the slow mercies of God will go on disclosing themselves, cloud after cloud will unroll and disappear, and ever the heights will become more radiant and the depths yet more luminous ; and still the more they see the more there will be to learn, and still the deeper they enter into the knowledge of Christ's love the vaster will be felt the depths of that love that surpasses all knowledge. So the light will ever grow, and the joy will ever increase, and the love will ever deepen, and the knowledge will ever rise, and always there will be more ; for it is the fulness of God Himself wherewith they will be filled, a fulness that custom can never make familiar, nor

time ever exhaust. That is what the apostle anticipates for them—how different from that which they have anticipated for themselves!—as the issues of their tribulation.

My brethren, why should I dwell on this to-day? You will not for a moment suppose that I am presuming to force a parallel between that apostolic moment of terrible trial and that grief which in God's natural course has fallen upon us here. Only, somehow, the great words of the apostle have haunted one's memory through the depression of the days; only of one thing I am sure, that he of whom our hearts are full was one of the few, those very few, from whose lips we could bear to hear, without apology, such strong, such awful words as these which came from the innermost soul of the great apostle. So few of us have the right to use this great language; from so few can these words come without a sense of unfitness, of disqualification, of presumption. We are so blinded by the world's dust and turmoil, we are so clouded by compromise and hesitation, we are so insincere, so earthly, so unconverted, we are so far from high visions and piercing calls, these burning flames which leap from the speech of St. Paul are not for us to touch without peril or offence. But *he*, he was different. To him they seemed akin, he understood, he had the right, we felt, to take them on his tongue. We asked for no apology from him, we murmured to ourselves no questioning qualification. As such words as these rang out from his lips—and who could ever make Scripture ring as he did?—their original force seemed to reach and touch us across all the dividing years. No insincerity withheld it, no half-hearted allegiance made them falter in their coming. The world, with its noises, its disputes, its vanities, its beguilements, its pettinesses, its greeds, this world threw no veiling mists between us and these Divine appeals as he made them. He who spoke to us seemed to have got past all that, seemed to have pushed his way through. He was not afraid of all that was involved—we felt—in facing the truth; he at least was

ready for the sacrifice and had counted the cost; and so, by virtue of that sincerity, of that purged eye, he saw something for us of that vision which the apostle opens. That inner world was real, substantial, to him; that fiery zeal had its echo in him, that ever-climbing life of grace upon grace had come within his ken, his life was a cleansed channel down which the news of it might pass to us, at least, without derision. And, I ask you, can there be a better test of the spiritual sincerity of a man than this, that we feel no shock as he speaks to us in Bible language? And was it not this which was the entire secret of Liddon's power over us when he preached? As we listened, St. Paul became intelligible, that inner world that lies before the spiritual eye was once more felt to be laid bare; our world—that world of ours which we collect together under the range of the outward eye; that world in which we creep about, whispering, and muttering, and nursing a faint hope, and struggling to keep our hold on the vision, and trembling ever lest it should break and vanish; that world of shifting resolutions and bewildering doubts, of miserable timidities and haunting hesitations; that world of ours had parted asunder—it was pierced through and through by that vibrating voice that shook us as it told of that which lay beyond, and lighted on us like a flame to sting and to stir. That voice of his! As I speak of him, as I recall to you his manner and his message, standing here in the place where his presence was so familiar, it is *I* who should be dumb; it is this silent pulpit which speaks to you; it is he whom we still feel here—he under whose dear and remembered tones our hearts still tingle and our spirits burn, so that we cannot well believe that we shall never more hear them again.

Bitter is our tribulation; but at least he has bequeathed to us imperishable memories that you and I will carry to our graves, uneffaced by all that the years—the coming years—shall bring. Perhaps to some here it will be a memory of St. Mary's at Oxford, crowded with that black mass of gowned

men, of the outburst of the organ and the hymn, and the quick passage of the preacher up the pulpit steps, and the low Bidding Prayer with its delicate articulation; and then across our life, our young life, giddy with light gaieties, glittering with all the fleeting gossip of the changing hours, we shall remember how there shot a voice alive with passionate insistence, that told of those eternal things that never fade away. And to most of us it will be the memory of the motionless crowd of upturned faces in this great house of God, as the yellow lights flickered and shone through the illuminated haze of some heavy December afternoon: they will never forget how up and up there rose higher and higher, filling all the misty hollow of the dome, the piercing tones of that most beautiful of all voices, as with kindling figure and with flashing eye he used to reason to us, then at the end of the year, of righteousness and of judgment to come. So near it all seems, so real, so living! Let him then speak as if alive to you to-day. It is his message, not mine, that I would deliver to you. Think only of him. Not yet has he quite gone from us, not yet has the grave hidden from our sight that body of his on which the impress of his soul is still beaming, in which and through which he bore his witness to God; still it lies in our hands for holy tending, still it pledges to us his presence. Oh! while yet it lingers with us, lying calm and quiet in the very room where he wrote, amid the books which he loved, listen to him while yet again he pleads with you, an ambassador for God, as if God were beseeching you by him; let that dumb thing be yet eloquent, let him that is dead speak. It is his name that has gathered you together here to-day. Surely we know what he would say to us, surely he in his unseen prison-house would desire most of all with the apostle that we should not faint at the tribulation which is his glory, —not faint, not be dismayed, not grow miserable and craven, not tremble in our loneliness. Why should we be lonely? why should we feel deserted? He has but passed into that hidden

world of which he has ever given us such a glorious report, and which was ever so nigh to him. And surely too, there, where he is, the one whom we knew and loved, he is ever still bowing his knees before God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, he is praying with all spiritual fervour that the Church left here on earth behind him may be strengthened with the might of his spirit, may be rooted and grounded in love, and that Christ may dwell in our hearts, and that we may be enabled to comprehend a little more of that which now he begins to behold ; that we may see with all saints what is the length, and height, and breadth, and depth, and may know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God. That is still his prayer, and that is still the voice wherewith he cries to us out of that dread silence of death ; and we, we can answer him back, we can remember him in our prayers before God, we who livein the same body of Christ of which he still is a member ; we who partake of the same food kneeling at our altar as that by which his life is still fed and his spirit still purified. In Jesus we are one with him, in Jesus who is Lord both of the world here and of the world beyond. God grant that we too may be made more faithful to that message from God which he, while he was yet among us, so loyally and so unfalteringly delivered !

AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN.[1]

"Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to Me. And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour."—ST. MATT. xvii. 17, 18.

IN all lives, and probably, though we know it not, in all moments of life, so full of animating spirit is the encompassing earth and heaven, there is what we call coincidence: the outer framework of things responds to the inner movement of the soul, that which we know within repeats itself in picture in that life outside which is seemingly so far removed from us, so alien. Such coincidence, fleeting and slight and swift as it is in ordinary days, strikes us with a curious force at all intense moments, amid all critical and stirring events; then it is that everything inanimate seems to echo and symbolise the emotion of the hour. The order of the outer life, so casual, so solid, suddenly becomes alive, so that its very accidents reflect our strong passions; we find ourselves pourtrayed in its accidental arrangements, a secret law appears to move in harmony with our feelings, chance itself submits to its sway. And that which is true within our own individual experience in some small way is true of the long life of humanity; and since no moment in all that long life approaches the intensity of the day of the Lord, therefore at that moment, above all, when the Lord came on earth, this coincidence was at work. The whole outward order of events fitted itself to the inner spirit, so as to constitute it a parable of the unseen; casual matters obeyed some hidden direction, some deep impulse, and grouped themselves into some significant arrangement. The whole movement of the days fills itself full with meaning,

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 21st, being the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.

with allegory; and the gospel writers, as we know, took a peculiar delight in watching this allegorical import of outward facts. Very often it would seem that their chief interest in recording this or that event in the Lord's life is to exhibit its curious parabolic reference to our Lord's own person and mission; it is not left, they feel, to mere chance, even in its outer accidents. This life they can see in its every-day occurrences, hints, and glimpses, and reflections of what He was, and what He did, and what He came to do. And one of the most remarkable instances of the full meaning to be discovered in this coincidence of events is that referred to in my text, that of the transfiguration. There, in the apparent chance that, at the same moment at which our Lord and the holy three were hidden in the mystic cloud on the summit of the hill, the apostles, the other nine at the base of the hill, were struggling in vain to undo the chains of misery from the soul of the possessed boy,—there, in that mere grouping of that famous double scene, Christianity has always seen, as St. Matthew meant it to see, as it has been immortalized in the picture of Raphael, a wonderful and vivid picture of herself, of her life, of the nature of her work.

It is perfectly familiar to you all—this scene, this parable. There she surely is, the Church, imaged before our eyes, the Church of God, as she is in her mixed history, with so much of heaven and so much too of earth, with so much supernatural glory and so much unfaithful failure. At all times this picture has been repeated. High up on the summit of the mountain, apart in secret among the holy few, there is hung the uplifted figure of the incarnate Lord. He is of the earth, and yet has passed away from it; He is here with her, and yet His presence is secret and unearthly; He is the Son of man, and yet a light has shone upon Him, the light of the resurrection, and His raiment has become white and lustrous, and His converse strange to human ears, and with Him unlooked for voices speak, ancient men of God mysteriously witnessing to Him,

and words fall from Him, dark, unfathomable, instinct with undiscovered meaning; and over all clouds have passed, overshadowing, and a vision has been given and has gone no man knows how, and out of the heart of the vision the hallowing syllables of the Most High God have come with comforting assurance: "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him." So it has been always; and up there too, high amid the silences, in the loneliness of this hollow of the sky, watched only by the motionless rocks, in stillness, in awe, in exaltation, they, the saints of God, the chosen spirits of the Church, the few, the rare, have again and again been called up, called to strive against the weariness of the flesh, to pray and wrestle and watch, to be near the Master in His hidden hours; and still, like those of old, they fall in fear as the strange sounds awake them out of their sleep, they stammer out vain words, and they wist not what they say, and they are soothed by the overshadowing of the cloud, and they are blessed by the fatherly sanction; and when all this is gone, still they find themselves alone, as of old, with Jesus only on the mount of contemplation, and for evermore they have a secret hold upon Him, a secret that has passed between them, which they can tell to no man. Such is the Church in each age, in each generation, at the point where she touches heaven in her holiest and highest sense. And, lo! at the foot of the hill that same Church, all through our long human story, strives and strives, amid noise and confusion and tumult, with the world that holds forward its children possessed of devils, and calls upon her to dispossess them. And she seems utterly powerless; and she sets herself to the task, and she tries all her skill, and in vain; and she is too anxious, at the very moment, to notice how, at the summit of the hill, her transfigured Lord is drawing down strength for her by communion in secret with the Father of all grace. She sees nothing of this, she looks not up, but down; and there, before her downward look, rolls on the ground, foaming, the child of the flesh, whom the devil holds so fast, yea, taketh

him still, that poor child of man, and teareth him, and casts him still into the fire and into the water, it drags him about until he gnashes with his teeth and pineth away.

Such the sight before the Church, and on either side of her, there on the earth, on either side of this sin-maddened child held out to her, there are two great appeals made: the appeal of the father of the child, the appeal to the Church's pity, the appeal that human nature makes with all its touching simplicity to the Church as it brings her its son, carrying him in its arms, imploring her to save him, crying aloud for help, for sympathy, for deliverance—the appeal of the unhappy always going up in the Church's ears; and the appeal of the scribe disputing. The reasoning, the critical spirit, is there by the side of that poor child, watching, waiting, proving, putting a test, asking for a sign. It is in the attitude of criticism; for the occasion is a typical point in argument, a topic for discussion. "We believe," it is saying, "in practical proofs. You claim our faith; you must justify your claim. You say you hold the power of redemption, the medicine of life: well, here is a case, the very case, here is a need—look at it. So long as you cannot save, why should we believe? Prove your efficacy, prove that you are clothed with supernatural powers, and the case will be so different: till then you must permit us to doubt a claim which only rests on your own assumptions." So humanity pleads, so the reason questions, and the Church is on her trial; and, lo! she is powerless. She hears the sneer of the taunting reason, she sees the disappointment, the fury of the humanity that she fails to redeem; and she herself is burning with desire to help, she sets herself to the task with all her powers, and still the child rolls there. The misery to be powerless in the face of such distress! The shame, the tears, the indignation of the faithful of the Church! Is this our inheritance then? is this the blessing promised? Can it be that this weak, struggling, over-mastered thing, battling so fruitlessly with the despairing and scoffing world, can this be indeed

that same Church of God which still, high on the hills of faith, holds uninterrupted communion with the Lord transfigured? Can this be the same Church that still hears the unutterable language of heaven, still sees with eyes unsealed the glowing glory of the eternal power and purity and peace before which the angels fall prostrate and adore?

Yes, we believe it; we believe in this double life. We are enabled to believe it of the Church because we know its echo so well in ourselves: we, too, live that double life. What can be more strange or more startling than our own paradoxical alternations? Surely the whole scene lives over again in every Christian soul. We know, each one of us, pray God, what it is now and again to be up in the mount with Jesus. Our soul has known what it is to be carried into that silent calm, that solemn peace, in which the presence of the uplifted Lord shows itself alive with all the quickening instincts of grace. Voices of God have been about us, and the veil is lifted, and we feel ourselves to be within that holy place; there is the hush, the awful hush, of heaven, in which we bow our heads as the name of God passes by. And yet, we know it, at that very moment, there at the foot of the hill, down there where our low impulses linger and crowd, down amid the herd of our vanities, our selfish passions, our worldly aims, down there, even while our spirit strains to understand the mystery of God's presence, the devil may have fast grip upon our flesh, a dumb devil, it may be, holds our desires tongue-tied, a deaf devil closes up all avenues by which the kingdom of God may penetrate. This or that carnal craving—an evil fury—may fling us under the sway of ugly imaginings, and mean dreams, and foul wishes. It may seize, and disturb, and drag, and tear, and we—we cannot cast it out. Our good instincts there may long to be free from the curse; our reason may jeer at us for the folly, for our wretched impotence: and yet we cannot break through. Our main self remains there unmoved by the higher aspiration; it stays at the bottom of the hill, struggling

in tumult and confusion, amid a mob of angry passions, and sad desires, and deceitful reasonings. And we ask, "Why this impotence? what is the cause of this incapacity?"

Let us examine our Lord's words, the words in which He rebuked that tumultuous scene at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration. Two words we know there were which He spoke: one to the multitude—the multitude who partly craved and partly questioned; one to the apostles, eager and desirous, and yet impotent. And the first to the multitude is the words of my text: "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" The words surprise us—they are not quite what we expect; but if we compare them with like words used elsewhere, they gain clearness. First, they cannot but recall the severer, yet similar, words used elsewhere: "A wicked and adulterous generation that seeketh after a sign." So, in indignation, our Lord refused to convince the ever-doubting scribes and Pharisees who were always anxiously pressing for some convincing sign from heaven. They never got nearer to Him than asking for a sign; and here, we are told, amid the crowd round the unsuccessful apostles, were scribes hotly disputing. They were surely at their old pursuit seeking a sign, challenging, "Give us one undoubted proof, and we will believe"; and to this challenge our Lord repeats here His frequent answer: "No sign except to faith; to unbelief, demanding a proof positive, no sign shall be given, for no sign can reach. How long shall I be with you? how long shall I move about among you without stirring this faith to see the sign? how long must I talk, and work, and you be still demanding a proof before you believe? O faithless generation! signs enough and to spare have there been already given to all who have the hearts to believe; but to them that have no such hearts no sign will ever be enough, no proofs will ever convince: therefore verily to them there shall come a day when no sign shall be given." And then the words seem to have reference, not only to the

questioning scribes, but also to the excited crowd, and even to the father of the poor boy in his blind desire for help in need. These words really seem to recall the rebuke to the crowd at Capernaum: "Ye follow Me, not because ye saw the sign, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled." They came, these people, pressing round about Him, excited with the wonderful works that He had done; but then, these works of the Lord, they were not the end, but the means of the revelation. They are not wonders to excite, but signs to reveal; they are tokens of His presence who demands faith, not in His works, but in Himself. "Thy faith hath saved thee, thy sins are forgiven." "Dost thou believe in the Son of man?" This is the purpose, this is the crown, of all that He does. But this faithless crowd before Him, He has been so long with it, He has so long suffered it; and yet it still runs after Him in blind, unthinking excitement, stirred by its own blind needs, does not know Him, hardly wishes yet to know Him. It does not discern the signs of the times, the signs of the Son of man. And even the father seems to have no real apprehension of Him or of His character. He is overwhelmed with his own anguish, it is true, he is weeping, crying aloud; his human misery, his necessities,—these are strong enough; but it is not with these, but with something above them all, that our Lord wishes to deal. He looks for the irresistible sense pushing its way through all these human wants. "Jesu, Son of David!" that is the cry to which He responds, "Jesu, Son of David! Thou, and Thou only, have mercy upon us!" And so we see here in this man, we see his faithlessness in the very form of his appeal. "Thou, if Thou canst," he says, "have mercy." "If Thou canst, if Thou canst be compassionate, if Thou canst heal and help." This to our Lord, the Son of God! Oh the faithlessness of the man!—still with a doubt, still with a question on his lips, still without reliance. Christ can heal, if only he will be healed. "How long shall I be with you, and ye not know Me more? How long shall I suffer you, and ye

not learn to rely? I am all power, all help, all compassion, all love. There is no question whether I can help, the only doubt is whether thou canst believe. It is a question for you, not for Me. If thou canst believe—all things are possible to him that believeth." So we know that our Lord worked upon the blind, self-inclosed human passions of the boy's father. He stirs at last something into action. Before then even the father's love for the boy, the man's sorrow indeed, rises higher, it breaks out, we are told, in tears and sobs; but higher now than all desire and all sorrow rises the cry of faith: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

We will not deceive ourselves. We may not draw near to Jesus for help with a mere question on our lips; and yet so often we come with it. It may be sometimes that we are distressed at the fact of sin; and then we are dissatisfied if we have gone near to examine perhaps the Church's work against sin, if we have given it our careful attention, and then do not perceive that her success is very evident. We sympathise with her aims, we deplore the sin against which she sets herself. It is socially very troublesome, it is obviously matter of regret. If the Church would only clear it away with a masterful hand, we should be among the first to congratulate her. But it is just this mastery which we miss, it is just here that our anticipations are disappointed. She is so oddly ineffectual. Where is the evidence that she is qualified for her task? Where is this success to which she appeals? Each case that she brings before us can be so easily accounted for in a hundred other ways than that; it admits of so many secondary explanations, we can never be quite sure that her explanation of the cure is the only one. Where is the convincing, the unanswerable sign? So we ask, so reason waits on its own scruples; and to such an appeal—we have already recorded it—Jesus will never have more than one answer: "You ask a sign before your faith begins; but to the ear that cannot hear, to the eye that cannot see, no sight and no sound will ever come!" Jesus sighed

deeply, and said: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall be no sign given it"; and He crossed over and passed to the other side.

But not only is it our reason that urges us to see if Christ will not do something to relieve us: our human instincts themselves, all that is best in us, revolt against the tyranny of evil. This sin,—it may not be outside us, but within our own flesh; and then we know its misery, the misery of the tyranny, and our hunger and our misery do drive us to Christ; and we go to church, and we sit there, and we kneel, and we rise, and we sing, and we pray, and still no peace comes. The deaf and dumb devil still holds fast its seat, and we pine and groan, and no deliverance sets our hearts free. It is not yet enough, it is not enough to wish, not enough to desire, peace; the blind, uneasy wish for peace may be only the selfish desire for ease; it seeks Christ only on the chance that it may be healed: "Christ, if Thou canst, deliver me; if not Thou, then I will try elsewhere." It must not be "Oh that I might find peace anywhere, only peace!" but "O Thou eternal Redeemer, Son of David, Thou the only blessed Son of God, oh, Thou alone canst give me peace: Lord, I do believe; help Thou mine unbelief."

And then we go further, one step further. We have had more than this blind wish for peace. We had a positive purpose in seeking Christ, and we do know Him, and we have made up our minds, and we have recognised in Him all that could renew, and purify, and redeem; and we had done more, we had followed Him close and long; we had loved to name ourselves by His name; and yet there is still so much restless sin alive and at work within and about us; it sticks to us, it dogs us up and down in our homes, in our daily rounds, we who have had steady influences for purity and uprightness and peace; and yet how utterly different it is! how much of harm, and mischief, and meanness, and misunderstanding linger about us! how unbroken does the circle of sin remain! Nothing

is done! Just so with the nine apostles at the base of the hill. They had followed, followed faithfully; they had put out all their powers, they had striven and striven. "Lord, why could not we cast him out? why could not we?" And our Lord's answer we know. It carries us up at once to the Mount of Transfiguration. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

Just remind ourselves, those apostles sat under the hill ignorant of that wonder on the summit; they were shut out. And why? First, what was the condition under which the wonder came? St. Luke tells us—prayer; while He was praying,—and long, wearisome, watching prayers, the prayer that tires and strains, the prayer of fasting in silence in unseen watches; so long, so tiring was the prayer of the Lord, that even the three companions, the best of all, could not last it out, and fell asleep. The long, silent prayer—to that came the answer of the transfiguration, in the power of that prayer our Lord came down the hill, and the people marvelled at the royalty of power that shone about Him through the glory of His prayer. And those three who had been up with Him in that prayer, how had they reached there? They had gone through the power of St. Peter's great confession. They were the three who stood out from the rest, clustering close about St. Peter, clustering about him in the great hour when he gave the great answer, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was that direct, personal, clear-sighted, positive faith that carried the three up the hill, and left the nine at the bottom: personal faith—the distinct, deliberate, unswerving, unhesitating faith that can speak out its mind; the faith which can single out its object from all else—"Lord, to whom shall we go?" the faith that goes out of all its fears and all its scruples, and knows no confusion and no indistinctness. But that decisive utterance can make its confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was the faith in which they had gone up the hill; that was the faith which admitted to the prayer which casts out evil.

My brethren, our devils are not cast out because we do not pray enough; and we do not pray enough because prayer soon wearies, because a long prayer is an impossibility to us, and we are incapable of the high, long strain of prayer, just because our motive for prayer is so utterly vague and indistinct. We cannot concentrate our energy of prayer on one vivid, realized, recognised Being, the object of it all. We let our impressions of Christ float loosely about us; we are content with indistinct religious emotions, and prayer that proceeds from such impulses as these will be unsteady and insecure as they themselves: it will soon tire, it will die down. No wonder that without the prayer that goes with fasting the devils will never be cast out; for, indeed, with such a faith as that we remain below the level of the devils. The devils, we are told in the gospels, knew the Lord clearly enough—better than any. "We know Thee who Thou art, the holy One of God,"—that was their cry. They made their confession with positive precision. We must know Him at least as clearly, as positively, as they, if we would ever cast them out. Let us press forward to know the Lord more clearly, more surely.

We need among us to-day most of all those who have in the strength of a clear confession been taken by the Lord aside, and have gone up the hill with Him, and have learned to abide with Him through His long night prayers. It is for the want of such men that the Church needs brotherhoods, not as a mere utilitarian centralization of forces, not for the pleasant succour only of mutual companionship in well-doing, but for intensification, through intimate spiritual communion, of the life of disciplined prayer. We want men set apart somewhat to win this gift to the Church. They must have the time to fit themselves for the light on the hill with the transfigured Master; they must be allowed by us to go apart from the busy occupations of the parish, to go aside with Him, and to concentrate themselves with care and with pains and with profound attention, as a laborious task, on this prayer which will so

heavily tax their spiritual faculties. That is the labour which we need, that is the secret labour which is never wasted. To the rough outward eye such retirement will look strangely remote and mystical to the needs of the day, but it is the most practical and effective method of winning direct results; for there are evils which will survive all efforts short of this; there are devils which can only be cast out by prayer and fasting. And, for ourselves, we need to do our very utmost to reinforce the highest point, whatever it be, to which our life has yet climbed. Our fight with evil is too often demoralized by being identified wholly with the actual collision with temptation as it arises; but, my brothers, the secret of all victory is not to be won in the thick of the scuffle with sin at the foot of the hill. There we are bewildered with the challenge, and confused with the heat and noise, and angry with ourselves. There in the thick of the collision it is often too late for us to act with decision and effect. The victory is always won beforehand, won in calm retirement, high up the hill, in quiet, steady moments of prayer, when we are alone with Christ. Reinforce these hours, these moments, and we shall be strong when the trial presses and the temptation urges. Some white spot in each life there is, when we are in grace and are at all loyal to that grace; some white spot far back behind the glamour and the gossip of the hurrying days; some white spot of light where Christ has already taken possession, where all is well with us, that secret spot withdrawn and still where we are released from all hot desires and loud contentions, where we do indeed name the veritable name, and do bend ourselves to the eternal will, where the Spirit comes, the Spirit of the Lord, which is the Spirit of liberty,—there, at that spot, at least, where grace has won its triumphs, there we do know the touch of peace and the strange communings that pass, and the voices that come and go, and we can adore. Those white spots,—retreat to them, strengthen yourself in them, reinvigorate them; increase those moments when real, purposeful prayer goes out from

you. Use them, enlarge their borders. At night perhaps, kneeling and waiting, if we are not impatient or hurried, they come, and suddenly you do touch God, and are still. Or in the morning, in front of some altar, before the world has deafened you, kneeling, waiting, receiving, interceding, you shut off all turmoil, and are not anxious or driven—then they come again; you look up, and, lo! Christ is there, and His raiment is white and glistering. Those are the moments of transfiguration; then it is that the battle against the sins that encompass us at the foot of the hill is to be won; then it is we draw in strength from on high which will avail to cast out devils. They will be around, as of old, thick as ever when we descend; but we shall be a little more firm and steady and secure for the effort of prayer beforehand, and the discipline of the quiet fast will have stored in us the courage that can face them and the force that can expel them.

THE FEAST AT CANA.[1]

"And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."—ST. JOHN ii. 3–5.

IT is a scene such as St. John loves to draw forth, a scene in which the apparent accidents of a passing incident let through the flash of that hidden glory that bides its time behind them. He shows how words and acts, in themselves perhaps casual and unconscious, are possessed by a higher spirit of prophecy; so that a phrase, dropped at hazard and unawares, becomes the vessel of that supreme revelation which St. John has, through years of absorbing study, appre

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, January 18th, being the Second Sunday after Epiphany, 1891.

hended in its innermost verity. So he delights in the passing word of this ruler of the feast at Cana, "Thou hast kept the good wine until now," with the same delight with which he watches, for instance, the water and the blood start from the crucified body of the Lord at the touch of the unwitting spear. In both cases a profound secret of revelation sprang into light, through the chance of a transitory circumstance, where it was least of all expected; and the contrast between the unforeseen occasion and the glory that breaks through it has itself a mystical fascination. The deep truth strikes home with a more telling force by virtue of the very unlikelihood of the vehicle which it snatches up for its service. It is this spirit which makes St. John lay hold of facts in their typical and suggestive character; not that he inclines in the least to throw over the facts for the sake of the parable which they suggest, but rather to dwell with loving insistence on the value of the facts themselves just because they have proved so rich in spiritual significance. He loves the force of a fact, of an action, of an actual phrase used at a particular moment; and so with this word of the virgin, we seem to have the right to use it as full of suggestive meanings that go beyond its immediate and original purpose: "They have no wine." Somehow, by some strange, hidden law at work below the surface, through that deftness and harmony which we in our puzzled amazement call "coincidence," by which external circumstances, at intervals of which the law is known only to God, overleap the blind barriers of that for which our ignorance has no other word but "chance," and by a sudden rush fuse themselves with the internal motives of will and of mind, so the virgin is prompted to let fall a word which goes right home, it would seem, to the heart of the mystery which the Lord is here on earth to fulfil. It appears to be but the natural expression of kindly sensitiveness that is distressed at the temporary difficulty; but, like a pebble thrown into a silent pool, it awakes a tremor, a movement,

through the depths of the Lord's being; it touches a chord which is charged with music, and the very secret of His mission here on earth is laid open in the sound of that phrase. He feels the pressure of the forces, those tremendous forces, which are yet to lift Him at last upon the cross at His last hour, that all men may be drawn to Him. He already now foresees that end, that hour, still delayed but so surely arriving, when, lifting His eyes to heaven in the upper chamber amid His own whom He has loved to the uttermost, passing round the cup of that great wine of His love, He will say, "Father, now the hour *is* come, glorify Thy Son." Why, why should His own mother hasten that hour, which will have terror as well as glory in it? Why should hers be the voice to bring it near to Him and signalize its coming? Why should she rashly utter a cry, which, like a sudden sound in silent snowfields, may hurry the fall of the suspended avalanche? "They have no wine": a simple word indeed, yet holding in it such deep expectations! "They have no wine," and He cannot hear the plea and not respond to it, for it is the very cry that enters into His ears and draws out His forthcoming pity; and yet the pity which rises to meet the need will only complete its gift when it has given its very blood for wine. Ah the straitening of that baptism, the bitterness of that cup of which He must drink before He can fill it for others with the new wine of heaven! "Ah! woman, My mother, what have I to do with thee? why press Me with that irresistible insistence? why should you be the one to force My steps to break up My merciful delay? Mine hour is not yet come."

"They have no wine." That too is the very heart of the complaint with which we are now beseeching the compassion of the Lord. We have become increasingly sensitive to the pathos of their fate who fall outside the area of God's good gifts. "They have no wine." That is what strikes us so profoundly. Entire masses of our population have been dis-

covered to be in that particular plight. It is not so much their abject poverty that we are thinking of, not the homelessness of those classes who just scrape along from day to day, hovering over the abyss of pauperism and crime, liable to the terrors of starvation at every touch of exceptional pressure; no, rather the phrase from St. John comes to our lips as we rise above all the region of picturesque and melodramatic distress, and consider the lot of those who work their way along in dull, and hard, and monotonous toil—toil that just carries them through, which uses all their practical forces and leaves nothing over for relief and for joy; toil that at best only just sustains them on their feet, and can never venture to slacken, and can never land them in security far from the peril of relapse; toil that permits of no freedom, no expansion on this side or on that, no glad exercise of surplus energy, no relief, no relaxation, no leisure; toil without light or shadow, without the luxury of change, without any vivid hope, without colour, without flavour; toil amid ugly and squalid surroundings, unenlightened by gift, or grace, or glory. This is the life that has so dismally depressed us as we looked round on it in its immense multitudinousness, and sadly muttered, "These people have no wine." There is a hitch somewhere; there is something missing which ought to be there. God never meant human life to be like that; it was never intended to be wholly used up in the very monotony of work. Everything in nature, though toil for food be its law, is also given its opportunity for joy, its sense of fling, its moment of happy and brimming release. No one can watch, for instance, the gathering of birds when work is over, as they skim over quiet waters or toss themselves in scudding groups along sunset skies, and will not know what is needed to make life complete. It is this element of joyful abandonment that is so terribly lacking from the grimy days of our depressed toilers. They need so much beyond the opportunity of winning their bread. Minds are being stifled, imaginations are

being choked, emotions are lying buried. All these want light, and air, and liberty, and peace, if they are to spring and to grow at all. Life should not be only as a hard taskmaster, wringing out the uttermost scrap of working energy; it ought to have some flavour in it of a richer freedom, some spark of a more kindly warmth, some echo of a marriage feast. No life is human that is wholly occupied in business, that has no thought in it of a fuller expansion, no vent for the feelings, and the instincts, and the passions that toil leaves unused. You and I have enjoyed such freedom as this; we all have known its power. Why should not these others have it, men and women like ourselves? That is what we are asking: why are they so fast bound down under their burden? It cannot be God's will: it is an unseemly accident; it is a disaster, and ought to be remedied. Lord, look! "they have no wine."

Now it is in this particular sense that perhaps our own generation has been more peculiarly disturbed. Other days have had their great philanthropists. They had their sudden access of pity for the very poor and the very miserable: but it has been our own special note to have become sensitive to the law that after all "man does not live by bread alone," but by very much more besides; and it has ceased to be possible that we should be satisfied by the mere fact that men can just manage to secure the wages of necessity. The existence of whole sections of our fellow men who can do just that, at the best, and no more, seems to us more depressing and more hideously wrong in some ways than the strange dramatic plea of the poorer classes beneath them, whose chequered life at least leaves room for human interests and for more electrical sympathies. Hence it is we know that the movement of the day is set not so much in the direction of higher wages as of shorter hours; and we have all been growing sensitive to this. And, in saying so, do not suppose that we attribute any special credit to ourselves. We do not

claim at all to be better than our fathers because we have been taught this or that secret which was not brought under their judgment. Each generation is allotted its proper function, its area in which to work ; and while possessed with the labour of its own particular task, it has no faculties to spare to notice the areas yet untouched, the burdens that have yet got to be borne. As each allotted piece of work is completed, the eyes are lifted and turned towards a fresh need that lacks fulfilment, a fresh necessity that must now be met ; and each generation is tested and proved according to the degree with which it recognises and responds to that particular field of labour which in its day is laid open to it. For me to say that we have grown sensitive to a special need is not to praise ourselves, but only to take notice of the call made upon us, to acknowledge and to accept our own proper responsibility. They of old had one thing to do, and they did it with greater or with less success ; now you and I have got to do another, and shall we do it better or worse than they ? That is the only question that matters. Nor, again, by claiming a new degree of sensitiveness, do we mean that no one was sensitive of this same necessity before us. Single, strong souls, or knots of men, have felt this particular need before now, and they have striven to satisfy it. All we mean is that now, instead of its being the prophetic effort of the few, it is the common inheritance of the mass. It is not now left to some rare devoted band, struggling against neglect and indifference, to assert that the life of the poor should have something in it more than bread and work alone, but we all of us, all who are brought at all under the influences that are astir in our time, recognise this instinctively. We have not got to educate ourselves by effort into sensitiveness to their fate : we find ourselves having it, we drink it in with the air we breathe. We all naturally are touched with this spontaneous pity of their necessity. We cannot help it. We are clouded by their misfortune, we cannot be at ease while we

perceive what they are losing. The dismal monotony of their unrelieved days weighs upon our spirits, without any merit of ourselves, by the mere growth of things; our attention is quickened to it, our sympathy is set working. Everybody you meet, of any character at all, is moved by this same compassion, is unhappy at the same contrast. It is all about, it is electric, it is contagious. We catch sight of the same distress in every one's face, no one of any intelligence stands outside it. Do what he will, however comfortable his own condition, he still feels about him now the presence of this over-burdened population, and the word of anxious inquiry rises to his lips, "Lord, they have no wine."

My brethren, to have felt the needs of our fellow men is to have come under the necessity of meeting them. We cannot have new feelings without, by the very fact, acquiring new responsibilities. We are responsible for the outlook to which our kindled emotions have made us sensitive; we cannot be as though we had never felt them. That is the peril, we know, of all this increase of pity. If we fail to act upon it, to give it practical results, we become worse than if we had never been stirred by it at all; and it therefore becomes very urgent for us to ask ourselves what we are doing with this force which is put into our hands: for sympathy is a force; the power to feel is a power to act; it is a store of energy that could be set to use, could be discharged in this direction or in that; and, if undischarged, it is wasted, it has been given in vain. Where then is the discharge of that energy taking place which this intensified sensitiveness has stored? That is the question for us all; and, thank God! many can give a fair answer to it. In every direction we find men and women who are doing their best to carry wine to those who have none. This is so noticeable and encouraging that so many who have received gifts of good cheer themselves of whatever kind do now hold them in fee for their fellows, they instinctively consider themselves to be in debt to those who have less, they are bound to bring their own

advantages to market, they may not hoard them to themselves, they must put them to others' profit, they must carry them where they are wanted to lighten dark places, to relieve the weary tediousness of work, they must distribute them, transfer them, share them; no man may take the gains which opportunity or good fortune or happy circumstances have brought him, and walk off with them without question or scruple to enjoy them alone: no, this is what men recognise more and more every day: this is the conscience that is alive in them. And so we see every one who has any contribution to make to the general good cheer,—whether it be a gift of song or of drama, or some skill in art or in athletics, or some helpful experience, or some special bit of knowledge, whatever it be, he must offer it, he is off with it to some club or hall or institute, where it will pass out from him and break with a touch of radiance the melancholy of neglected faces.

This growth of social conscience answering to the sensitive impulse of pity is for us full of hope. And yet one more step must be taken before all is sure. The conscience to complete itself must get past the stage of desultory and impulsive and sporadic effort. Confined to these, it is certain to lapse, and grow weary, and flag. It must guard itself against its own reactions, and recoils, and disappointments, and failures. It must summon to its aid the corrective succours of the intelligence, so that it may be conscious of wisdom directing and improving its efforts; it must do its task in a way that satisfies its mental criticism: otherwise the reason, left out of the business, will be for ever carping at its sentimentality, foes will be for ever pointing the finger of scorn at the loose and irregular and casual attempts of this fitful humanitarianism. Conscience, once called into play, always aims at the coming intelligence corresponding to the demands of reason. It cannot go on with its work if it is conscious that the work is open to the charge of folly or of insecurity. The danger then of the social conscience lapsing through the desultory and accidental char-

acter of its attempts is a very real one; and it is in view of that most real danger that I will venture to plead before you to-day on behalf of one special effort that has been made to supply this up-springing conscience with an intelligent organization in a permanent and experienced institution.

The Oxford House in Bethnal Green, of which many of you may have heard the name, has this great end in view: to gather together the forces that are from so many sides pressing, to discover their own beneficial use, and to give them that intelligent direction which may distribute their efficacy with the richest profit; it secures to them the enormous advantage of permanence, of continuity, and of co-operation; it lodges them at those places where their gifts will best avail, it disposes of them according to the methods and experience which is always on the spot, always gaining in the accuracy with which it measures the needs and allots the work. There in that house any man who has any capacity of any kind to bring finds himself put to use, and can be perfectly certain that that use is genuine. Any one who will read their annual report will be astonished at the variety and the extent and the interest of the work that is now in full career there. And there is another characteristic of this institution which more especially entitles me to speak of it here in this cathedral. In bearing abroad good cheer to those otherwise over-clouded with a forlorn monotony it does not forget to whom it was that the blessed mother carried her sensitive anxiety as she looked up in His ace and whispered, "They have no wine." It is the same Lord called to the table of man's earthly feast in whose silent presence these young men of to-day still recognise that one Wisdom who can meet the want, the one Master of whom it can be said, in any moment of critical strain, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." "Whatsoever He saith," that is the one thing and the only thing to do, that is the deep conviction in which this Oxford House is founded; and the wine that they bear to the cheerless home may be but the fruit of

an earthly vine, it may be but the various boons of a secular culture: but then this common right of all men to have those boons brought near to them springs from our common brotherhood in Christ; it is because all human life is made in Him a holy thing, that therefore every fragment of it has its claim to be considered, claim to be fostered, claim to be given room and air and light and joy. Christ endowed them with their power and pity, and Christ again is the source of that brotherly eagerness in those who have something to give to share it with others who need it. It is because He has knit us together in one that we are pledged to Him to put our powers to the use of our fellow men, to hold ourselves in debt to them for all that it is in our hands to do on their behalf, that Christ sets that pity, that compassion moving, which cannot endure that we should enjoy our own good fortune to ourselves alone. And as Christ is the secret fount both of the right of those who need the cheer and also of the response of those who bring it, therefore at this Oxford House they think it well to lift His name out of the secret places where He prompts, and to show it openly inscribed on their banner. For Him, for His service, they offer what they bring; to the fulfilment of His desire they dedicate it; under His sanction they turn; under His blessing they move in and out. And in so doing they, if they are loyal to their creed, avoid a moral peril which is but too apt to beset philanthropy; they shake off every touch or tone of assumption of superiority, of benevolent complacency, of personal merit. How can they permit such a temper? They are not superior people who kindly condescend to shed a good influence abroad among their less fortunate neighbours: no, indeed; they are there in Bethnal Green as fulfilling the plainest and simplest duty. Another has sent them, whose errands they have to carry out. He has charged them with the distribution of certain good gifts of His own to men, of which they are appointed purveyors; they are engaged to see that the good cup goes round, that all who can take

their share in the common heritage of human gladness shall have it. They are there, it is a sheer necessity of their Christian position to play the part of good neighbourhood; if they can in any way help, they are bound to do it: that is all. The servants who drew the wine and bare it to the guests felt no merit and assumed no airs. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That was the matter of fact direction under which they moved round the tables; and that sound, healthy, simple, unassuming direction is what still governs the life of this Oxford House: "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." It is not the rule of an ascetic devotion, of a religious brotherhood; that is not the title which they claim in any way; that is a most noble ideal which they do not offer to fulfil: but here it is rather in the honest simplicity of Christian gentlemen who are expected to do their plain, undeniable duty wherever it is shown them that this community sets itself to obey the most wholesome maxim, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." That direction, whispered by the blessed mother to the waiting and wondering servants, arrives to these men of whom I speak through the lips of their mother the Church. Through her Christ has made known to them that there is a task He has in hand for them to do, and they are grouped therefore round and about the parish church, though their work may spread far afield beyond that. They have one fixed tabernacle within which they seek and find the strength which sustains them; there they concentrate their spiritual worship, there is the altar from which they are fed with the bread of life which renews and reinvigorates their commission from Christ.

Such is the work, and the men are ready and are there, and there is no limit to what they find it possible to do. Several years of steady experience there have given them a sure footing, and established and enlarged their range of industry; and now the moment has come when buildings must be given them which will allow them to fulfil what they have undertaken. As it is, struggling along in scant, ridiculous lodgings,

they find all growth forbidden, all advance blocked. If any one, then, desires to help a work for the Church in the name of Christ, a work of which the need and the good can be positively assured, let him never say he does not know how to do it so long as he can give to the building of this Oxford House at Bethnal Green. "They have no wine, these people"; still that plaintive cry rings on, haunting us with its pathos. When of late the bleak and biting cold has stripped this city of its last vestige of colour, of softness, of tenderness, of beauty, as now, for all its bright sunlight, it pinches and starves the life down to its lowest and most forlorn level, as it lays its weary hand on those whose monotonous drudgery is broken only by this terrible interlude which brings daily nearer that sickness, that starvation, that death which all their force has been spent for so long in keeping at bay, we feel surely more sorely than ever the piteousness of a lot which never escapes from the wearisome anxiety of winning moment by moment its daily food. Such a life is savage; it is not human until it has got its head above the immediate pressure of practical wants. The heart must be given freedom, the whole manhood must feel itself alive, there should be something of light, of brightness, of expansion. Those are the pledges, the pledges that we are not only toilers in a workshop, but children in the home of our Father. God's witness of old to the heathen was that He ever filled their hearts, not only with food, but also with gladness; and Christ is here come to make manifest that joyful brotherhood, Christ is here seated in our midst at our feast; and if under the pressure of His presence these needs of others have become more vivid to us, and we feel as if we too might bring them some help, some good cheer, something poor and cold and scanty perhaps of our own, yet which, given in His name, may be transfigured even as water into wine,—if we to-day are moved by such a desire, then let it not die away in the impotence of sentiment, let it be pledged to act as He requires; listen, listen to the enforcing voice of

the Church which is whispering in our ears, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

THE SOLIDARITY OF HUMANITY.[1]

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—GAL. iii. 28.

THE solidarity of the entire human race—that is one, we know, of the central verities which possessed the soul of the apostle of the Gentiles. On it he rang all the changes, tracking it down to its lowest layer, as it were, in the Acts, on the ground of that one blood out of which God had made from the first all nations upon the face of the earth, who are all His offspring, made in the image of Him who is the image of God; and then following it up into the highest vision of fulfilled redemption, when, gathered up into the one body of the new man, all barriers shall be shattered and transmuted, and there shall be nothing left that keeps Jew apart from Gentile, or bond from free, or male from female, for all are once again become in Christ Jesus one man. So on every level of life he finds in it an illuminative principle; and it is well for us to recall on his day a truth to which he was the first of men to give its deep and eternal significance.

But he and we, dear brethren, are of different metal and calibre. He saw it in its spacious fulness, embracing the entire race; he saw the distinctions that bar men's unity all shattered and gone. So glorious was the outbreak of that revelation, that it flooded his soul in one leaping rush of masterful movement. But we are weak, and our souls are scanty and poor, and our spiritual apprehension is petty and cramped; and we can only

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, January 25th, being Septuagesima Sunday and the Conversion of St. Paul, 1891.

get hold of it bit by bit. Very slowly the full meaning of it creeps in, and we seem hardly able to do more than master just one little corner of it at a time. We use its great language no doubt, we are conscious of a thrill that stirs in deep response to it from our very heart of heart; but we cannot realize it or apply it in the concrete to the actual earth at our feet, to the men and women about us, except by slow and sequent steps, as the pressure of the years forces us to think it out, now in this direction and now in that. It is this gradual process of discovery which manifests itself in ever new degrees and fashions of that sensitiveness to the fate of our fellow men of which we spoke last Sunday. Each generation, according to its opportunities, catches sight of some new section of human beings to whom this truth of the unity of the race in Christ is seen to apply. For years, for centuries, that division of the race may have been blocked off, by circumstances, from the distinct vision of the Christian body. That body can only use its eyes over a limited area at a time; and while it is intensely occupied with some one enthralling scene, or bent on some one urgent piece of action, it is compelled to leave the rest in dim unconcern, it cannot notice or attend to what is going on there; and the result is, that all the human beings that lie massed within those unilluminated sections fail to come within the horizon of the living imagination of the Church. They are taken *en bloc*, they are swept up into some partial and unqualified formula, they are not felt as individuals with separate souls, each alone in its life's story, each varying infinitely from every other in the way in which we instinctively feel the varied identities of those amid whom our active days are passed. These remoter populations are not recognised in this breathing reality. They are not to us as our own flesh and blood. They are a dim and alien swarm, unknown and undifferentiated; and very distant and unmeaning their joys and sorrows seem to us. We are not in touch with their infirmities, we do not enter inside their situation, and cannot see and feel it from within

as they see and feel it. The unity of blood and of life is not yet an actuality to us. So it goes on, and then, slowly or suddenly perhaps, by the shifting of circumstance, by the accident of war or of commerce, we are brought into living contact with them; they pass within the scope of that horizon which our vital emotions can succeed in covering, and then it is like a new discovery. It startles and bewilders us; we are shocked at the ridiculous inadequacy of the formulæ by which we formerly had so glibly disposed of the fate and the fortunes of our fellow creatures, and, in our confusion, we fancy that the discovery has been made perhaps by modern intelligence, which had not been allowed for by our creed; while all that has really happened is that we had never till now brought our creed to bear upon ground that was practically smothered up out of our sight, and thought, and feeling. The discovery is not a new truth, but a new and unexpected region to which our old truth is suddenly applied. The light of the gospel, instead of breaking out upon the whole face of the earth like the morning, is for us being turned, like a lantern, on to portion after portion; and as each portion on to which the light moves springs out of the darkness, it startles us by the sharp contrast between the black blindness in which it had lain secreted and the illumination into which it has leaped.

Let us recall one large and obvious instance of what we mean, an instance familiar to us all: it is the case of the great mass of heathendom. When Christianity had once pervaded Western civilization, the heathen, instead of being felt and touched as real living creatures, in the way in which they had been known to the early Church, became mere black lumps of foreign substance, dimly discerned in far away lands over the sea, of whom travellers brought back strange and horrible tales. To these remote and solid blocks of humanity Christians were not afraid to apply detached texts from the Bible without qualification, texts which spoke, say, of the natural man, given over to corruption, to the devil, to destruction, to wrath.

These texts, we know well, sum up a certain position, a single law; but that position and that law are not complete in themselves—they are balanced by make-weights, by counteracting forces; and the Bible recognises this, and over against this particular set of texts therefore it has a counter-set, texts that tell of the innermost presence of the power of the Father warring against the corruption of the natural man, warding off from him his natural foe, foreseeing from the foundation of the world the Lamb that should be slain, and in His name beating back the flood of destruction, and traversing the wiles of the devil, and restraining the advent of wrath, and in all ways securing that in every land "whosoever doeth righteousness shall be accepted before God." There are such texts by the hundred, but they were all forgotten and passed over. The unity of the entire race in the second Adam, as in the first, overbalancing the fall, undoing the loss, so that where sin had abounded, grace should much more abound: all this revelation of mercy dropped out, was not remembered or understood, and this mass of the heathen were regarded by many as if they were all doomed, accursed, lost; and excellent Christians spoke of them in terms that implied this, without for a moment asking themselves how they could reconcile such a fate with the love and compassion of God the Father. It was not that they themselves, who so lightly committed the larger half of the world to spiritual destruction, were not kindly, gentle, tender-hearted people, true in spirit to that Father whom they worshipped, whose very name denied that He could be other than as a father who pitieth his own children. They were kindly, sincere, merciful Christians; but there was no living experience open to them of what their terrible words implied. Their imaginations were not quickened to realize the actual humanity of the separate personalities who composed that remote block of heathen blackness, and nothing therefore came to check the easy-running phrases. A mild sorrow for so wide a disaster overshadowed them as they recalled it, and then passed; all

the horror of it served to give edge to some appeal for workers at a missionary meeting; but still, even in its more violent enthusiasm, the terror was vague and hollow, not filled in with concrete images of flesh and blood. It never struck upon these as so intolerable that it should force them to reconsider their statements, to re-examine whether they had not omitted some factor from their calculations, to search and see whether God Himself had not taken any measures to forestall and to disarm so disastrous a consequence.

And so it came about that text after text lay forgotten and unused, until the new expansion of truth threw us into immediate contact with that world that sat in gross darkness; and the awful vastness of those populations, the interest of their actual feelings, hopes, passions, loves, fates, all burst in upon us, and we found them capable of intimacy, of devotion, of affection, possessed of attractions, of gifts, and of goodness: we felt them to be strangely like ourselves. And then, critical history carried us back over such long years of their historical development, and unveiled such an immense and often fascinating story, unrolled their manuscripts, unearthed their buildings, collected their arts. Such wonders, such graces, such efforts, such high hopes, such pathetic falls! and all this, did it mean nothing? was it all gone one way, as the beasts that perish? was there no light or shadow,- good and bad alike gone down to the blind pit, and, worse, to a hopeless, irredeemable judgment? How could it be? Men recoiled from the intolerable paradox; and in the recoil, in their angry confusion, it seemed to them that their creed had been the cause of it all, their creed had been responsible for the statements that had become now so plainly incredible; and, if so, their creed must be thrown off, together with the impossible condition which it sanctioned. So thousands, we know, have done; and yet it was not true: that very creed which was become illuminated to them by their new experience, all its neglected words, so long left to slumber, were now starting out

into life, they were winning back their importance, the light of the gospel was being turned on to this fresh department which had not yet been reached. These Christians had learned perhaps the depth of their own sin, the power of the atonement to relieve the burdened conscience. That was much: now they were to lift their eyes and look abroad, and be taught the deep significance that underlay that mystery of Christ which the Apostle Paul preached, the mystery of God working in history, the mystery by which multitudes and races, set apart by the counsel of God according to the bounds of their habitation, were watched over, and guarded, and guided, and trained under the eye of a God who had never deserted nor failed them; for indeed He was not far from any one of them, since in Him they were alive and were moving and had their being until the day when they should at last, stage by stage, according to the times appointed and determined, find the God after whom they felt, and know the God for whom they sought, and be knit up into the fellowship of the mystery in which there is no distinction to bar off one people from another, but all are equally dear and near to Him—to Him, the one Man in whom there can be no difference between first or last, between Jew or Gentile, between bond or free, between male or female.

It is simply by realization of the unity of the race that we have learned our mistake. If all along we had really felt the heathen to be men and women like ourselves, we should never have imagined God dealing with them in a way in which we could never dream of His treating us. As soon as we saw and felt that they were identical with us, then we sought in the Bible for the explanation which before we had not troubled ourselves to find, and so searching we found it. And so it is in our other case now. We suddenly become sensitive, say, to the actual misery of living human beings, and the meaning to them of much that our fathers had quietly tolerated or passed over with a decent sigh. Poverty, desolation—these

were always there, but they had not received as yet for us the full power of the light as it slowly turned. So far as we noticed them, we were satisfied to pass them over with some phrase caught up, utterly divorced from its context and its meaning, something like "The poor ye have always with you," and we said it, and it all seemed smooth and accounted for; but in reality our imagination had not begun to work or to take hold. Now here too the lantern has made another turn, and the full inner significance of what poverty may mean shoots out into the light, and we start; and so startling is the force of the sight that we seem to have arrived at a new discovery, and our comfortable phrases and our economical subterfuges all die on our lips, and we charge the neglect and the wrong on Christianity. And yet it is the light of Christ Himself which is turned on to these dark spots, it is He who now summons our attention to them: other tasks for other men, this for us; for it is His name which has secretly knit the bond of blood which is the source and the force of our new sensitiveness to the sorrows of these our fellows; it is He who has made the whole world kin, who has given solid and energetic reality to that plea that, for each of us, all that belongs to the lot of man is a matter of personal concern. It is because He by His gathering up of the whole race into one body broke down the walls of partition that divide people from people, that therefore we to-day, impregnated by His Spirit—be it unconsciously or consciously—are stung as with a personal wrong, a personal affliction, by the hardships of these others. Christ is the sole key and cause of our humanitarian sensitiveness, and it is He who now bids us move beyond that nearer ground which our sympathy had already covered, and extend the frontiers of His dominion, the dominion of His pitiful compassion, that dominion within which reigns the one supreme law by which in Him there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither barbarian nor Scythian, neither bond nor free.

We discover bit by bit what is yet to be done, and where

the law of love has not yet been brought to bear. And the discovery itself is often baffling enough; just as many are upset now merely to have discovered a whole area of misery which they had before passed by with a light heart. How great then is our trouble when we begin to find that the mere discovery is not enough! For in the very act of discovery, of discovering our common fellowship with men and of realizing the responsibilities which that imposes on us, we discover also that this fellowship lies thwarted, damaged, and broken. Sin has loosened it, has disjointed it, has worked huge gaps in it, has poisoned it, has corrupted it. God has indeed made of one blood all people that are on the face of the earth; but, alas! though the underlying pressure of His forgiveness in Christ has ever been at work to save that fellowship from utter dissolution, nevertheless it is a fellowship which needs redemption, needs not only discovery, but recovery also. We cannot run out and fall on our brother's neck as soon as we have recognised our kinship, and welcome him in and make all right. That is what our impulsive hearts desire. "O my brother, my sister, so long I did not see you; you suffered—I forgot, I ignored your distress: now that is all changed, we have recognised each other; come, sit down, eat, drink, and be merry." It cannot be like that. The true relationship lies buried deep beneath accumulations of past wrongs: not in an instant shall we unearth it or set it free, or establish it in confidence, or trust it to put out the strength of its inner motives; not at once will these divided parts come together or weld themselves into one body: nor, indeed, can they ever succeed, as we believe, in making good that discovery of kinship, unless they appeal to the redemptive energy of Him who alone knits the kinship and prompts the discovery. Christ alone, we say, can rescue from the degradation of our sins that bonded relationship of which He is the ground.

And therefore it is that we Christians cannot believe that that humanitarian sensitiveness which is now discovering so

vividly the fellowship of blood will ever be capable of achieving the good which its discovery makes so desirable. With the discovery comes the process of recovery, the redemptive process of restoring to its proper force the bond of brotherhood. And oh the tough discipline before that recovery is completed! oh the pain, the toil, the effort, the piteous lapses and relapses that will sicken our hopes, the power of evil repugnance that will have to be overmastered in us before all is done! Very slow, very weary, will be the work; and who will be sufficient? And if we hold on, my brethren, we shall not shut our eyes to the serious task of that which is required of us, or be surprised at the length of time that it will take; we shall not imagine that all will go easy, because we have found out what we ought to do and what our enlarged responsibility for our poor fellow men demands of us. No; we shall remember that the very apostle whose ideal of the solidarity of men in Christ was so wide and embracing was the same whose conception of inward sin was deepest and most intense. St. Paul, who saw the opening of the vast mystery in which there should be no longer the barrier between Jew and Greek and bond and free, saw also that it could only be gained through the cross, through the rending of the veil of the flesh, through the blood sprinkled on the sinning soul; and therefore he disguised no difficulty, he traced no easier road than that. And therefore surely he would never have been surprised to-day if the one ray of that disclosed vision had dragged itself out in the weary process of recovery into a thousand years. For if recovery of this broad catholic unity of man involves in its attainment the gradual inworking of the redemptive power of the cross into the separate souls that have to be redeemed from their sin, then the work may well be slow, and the long years will never be too many.

Let us take that lesson of patience then to heart now in this special field where we have learnt to know and feel what the unity requires of us. These wronged poor, whom the

pressure of the social system drives so hard, it is everything to have had the light turned that we may see them; it is everything to discover the work to be done. It is everything, for without it no start can be made, and the power to begin is the first necessity. But it is only the start. It will mean a stiff and grim undoing of ancient evil, a painful strife with present sin, sin on both sides of the sundered brotherhood, sins of malice and anger, of impatience, of suspicion, of ingratitude, of selfishness, before the kinship between us and our fellows will work itself out into smooth and equitable social relations. Again and again we shall be startled to see how powerful is the resistance of ingrained evil, to hold apart in fierce collision those who have begun by recognising their true fellowship to one another.

It is here we know we part company with all humanitarianism that always seems to fancy that brotherhood will be recovered merely by being discovered. We know better, and the Church to-day bids us mind that lesson. Epiphany, the season of discovery, of manifestation, passes, to leave us face to face with Septuagesima for the gathering solemnities of Lent. We look—we are bid to look—towards that new heaven and that new earth wherein shall dwell righteousness. We have lifted our eyes, and have beheld the vision of that Easter glory when all will be knit into the one new Man who bonded them together into that body with which He rose from the grave. But between us and that vision stands out, we know well, the black arms of the cross on Calvary, and those who would pass from Epiphany to Easter can travel by no other road than by the Way of Sorrows. Back, then, from the new glow and heat of social enthusiasm we shall turn to examine our own lives in the secret places of the soul. It is sin that chokes and throttles our common brotherhood in man; and as for sin, the great thing is to begin with ourselves, not to spend ourselves in hoarse railings at the gross sinfulness of the world at large, but patiently and humbly ask,

in resolute and serious silence: "What is my sin that makes me selfish? What is my sin that holds me back from the duties which I clearly recognise that I ought to fulfil? Why am I so lazy, so careless, so ready to satisfy myself with the gratifying emotion of pity in my own house, in my own home? What am I doing there to create this warmth of brotherhood, to live in the spirit which is the bond of peace? No amount of loose compassion for others will excuse me from my own proper task. How goes it there? What is the secret of my ever-recurring failure? Why is it that each year finds me enwrapped as of old in layers of comfortable selfishness which I for ever deplore, and yet for ever fail to loosen? Why is my wrath at others' wrong-doing so ready and so eager, while my own will is so sluggish, so timid, and so inert? What is it that dulls my resolution and deadens my spiritual nerve? Why cannot I be braver to do my own little part in practical action for the good of those who are close at hand to me, in breeding loving-kindness there, in keeping down my own petulant self-assertion?" Those are the pressing questions for each one of us, questions keen surely as barbed arrows searching out those places where we most fear they should come; those are the inquiries to push home as the light of Christmas dies, and we pass under the shadow of self-discipline, if we would be loyal to the austere note that is sounded with double force to-day by the warning of Septuagesima and the memory of the great apostle of the conversion.

PACE.[1]

"He shall be like a tree planted by the waterside, that will bring forth his fruit in due season."—Ps. i. 3.

When men come to review the period in which you and I are living; when they look it over, and sum up its characteristic and typical significance; when they assign it its place in contrast and comparison with the period before and after, they will surely allot to it the note of pace.

All our invention, all our skill, varied and rich as it is, seems to issue at last in this one result that it increases the ease of motion, of communication, of transit. In some way or another it brings near things that were far off. It negatives distance, it gets us over the ground, it abolishes material obstruction.

Steam, wire, tube, spark—these are ever being forced into yielding us a yet more rapid service. Either they hurry us off at yet sharper speed to any remotest corner of the earth which we would visit, or they toss us to and fro along the lines of our daily occupation with ever more magical ease, or they convey to us, while we stand still, knowledge for which we should, without the aid of telegraph and telephone, have waited weeks and months to acquire. At any rate, in every form, the gain that we reap is a gain in speed. That which used to take a year takes a month; that which we could manage in a month now scarcely occupies a day; that which once would have absorbed a day in diligent search and toil is now transacted in the swift passage of a minute.

[1] Preached at Oxford, on Sunday, August 2nd, being the Tenth Sunday after Trinity, 1891.

It is pace that has gained, and is still gaining. Now what are the departments of our life, what are the conditions of our growth, to which pace is a good servant?

Obviously pace aids everything which belongs to the wider diffusion of materials. This is its foremost benefit. All that was locked up in separate compartments can be brought into general distribution by the greater facilities of rapid movement. All that was confined to the few at this spot or at that can now be scattered broadcast among the many. Things and persons, scenes and experiences, which of old were held apart by jealous barriers of necessity, are now brought into rapid contact and fusion. The divided treasures of the world find themselves transferred with ease into a common stock. Hither and thither, in and out, they pass unhindered, with the freedom of wide and elastic combinations. And thus the resources of civilization, the glories of art, are thrown more and more open to the disposal and use of the main multitude. It is "the many" that gain. Where few once travelled, now all may go. The entire surface of the earth is laid open to the survey of all with ever-advancing security. Wider and wider spreads the field of experience, of which all may have a share.

Pace, then, is democratic, it aids diffusion ; and we can note this result most emphatically in the region of knowledge.

The characteristic effort of our day is that for the diffusion of knowledge. We have, indeed, our students, rare and high, who still spend their more solitary life in the splendid accumulation of knowledge. But students such as these there have always been at all ages ; and our own time certainly cannot claim any unique credit to itself on this score. Nay, it may have certain qualms about this matter. But what is noticeable is the devotion and the zeal with which our teachers act in the task of spreading the area which knowledge can cover. What we see is that men of good ability and of special attainment give themselves to the task of carrying about, far and wide, the best intellectual and literary culture of the day. Their impulse

is not to store up honey in the hidden hive without asking what may be the issue of their labour, but to open out to as many as they can possibly reach the richest treasures of the scholar. The very best shall be given to all who will take it. Every door shall be thrown wide, that all who will may enter. This is their inspiring motive. Let every willing eye and ear be brought into sight and hearing of all that is perfect and excellent and true and good. Let nothing be hushed away in secret and privileged monopoly. Knowledge knows nothing of fear or favour. Her courts should be free. What to her are distinctions of class, or wealth, or power? Nay, Wisdom should cry in the streets; in the chief places of concourse. She should stand in the top of every high place; by the way in the places of the path. She should call at the gates, at the entry of the city, at the coming in at the door. "Unto you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of man. Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither; and him that hath understanding, let him eat of my bread, and drink of the wine that I have mingled."

Here is an ideal; here is a noble ambition: it is sanctioned by this word of the wise man. And it is this open-hearted freedom which has been made possible by the mechanical swiftness with which the multitude can be brought into contact with the precious things that knowledge has stored. The communications are all open and rapid. The knowledge accumulated at the centres can be carried at any moment whither it will. The messengers can pass to and fro with the latest news. They can make all who will attend aware of what it is that the finest scholarship has just achieved in interpretation or discovery. These messengers of ours train themselves to give simplicity and clearness to that which has been with labour and difficulty won. They industriously sift out the most available material and clean it and polish it and shape it, so that it may journey far with lightness and ease. Then, again, ever swifter and surer is the mechanism that multiplies the literature in

which these results are packed for travel. Or, again, as with you who are here to-day, you need not wait in your distant homes to listen to the echoes of what is doing at the high places where Wisdom holds her court. But you can travel thither yourselves, and can wander in and out of her ancient chambers, and roam through her halls where her treasures lie stored, or can watch her, as it were, at her secret work, and can feel the charm of her fair palaces, and taste the breath of her gardens, and dream that you too have known the wonders of her gracious industries.

The diffusion of knowledge—the wide diffusion of the best knowledge—this is the task that is being fulfilled with such unparalleled power. And this task is a right and true one for us to undertake—for us to make specially our own, in this day: just because it is the task for which the special development of rapid communication, which is the marked characteristic of the time, is eminently adapted; for it is the office of and duty of each age to turn to fullest service the peculiar advantage and opportunity put into its hands to use; and our peculiar opportunity and advantage over all other ages lies in this speed.

Yes; speed is our gift, and speed assists diffusion. Let us do our very best to put it to profit. Yet it may be well—it may be all the more needful—to recall what there is in us, which no mechanical means can do much to hurry, and which is least of all affected by any increase of pace. What is there?—for, no doubt, if we do not take care to note it, we shall get into trouble with it. Either we shall ignore it altogether, while our excited attention is absorbed by the bustle and the heat of that which is pushing forward with all its might; or we shall be disappointed and angry at the lack of all apparent energy and movement in that which fails to get forward with the rest. We shall attribute to it unmerited failure; we shall suspect something wrong where all is really as it should be. We shall become impatient and anxious over a poverty of

growth which, in comparison with the fertile advance made all round it, seems hampered and slow; while, all the time, the slowness is essential to its proper character.

Let us see, then, what there is. And, first, it is obvious that in the sphere of knowledge there is a gift, a faculty, which cannot, by any device, be hurried.

Intellectual insight and intellectual judgment—this, in all its higher forms, in which it attains to individual independence, whether critical or creative, this is a thing which must grow slowly. The power to detect good and bad workmanship; the power to pronounce on the real value of a literary product, to put the finger down on the rare and fine elements, and account for their rarity and sift out their finer touches—this is a power, dear people, which cannot be handed over from one person to another; it cannot be passed about, or packed up in a parcel, or hustled off by the post. It does not submit to the rapid processes of diffusion, of which we have been speaking. It cannot be picked up by a saunter through the libraries of a university. No; slowly, very slowly, it must be grown—it must be imbibed. It cannot be excused any stage in the steps of its proper formation. It must have gone over, for itself, all the material, all the experiences, which go to its final working. It cannot obtain these secondhand from others. For it is the vital passage through these experiences and materials which alone qualifies it to deliver its judgments. Such a passage, above all in our day, when the material to be traversed has become so vast and so varied, so ancient and so far-reaching, so delicate and so excellent and so rich, cannot but take time—yes, a long, long time. Mechanical rapidities can do something to ease it: they can convey the materials to the student's hand; they can throw them into shape for his use; they can fit him with tools and instruments, with indices, and glossaries, and lexicons: but there they stop. The passage itself must still be made by the student himself, and it is long, and it is difficult, and, moreover, time is essential to its success. The

mind must win familiarity, intimacy, with the literature set before it; it must brood and ponder; it must exercise itself in literary habit; it must breed in itself literary instincts; it must have leisure to pause and assimilate and digest. Far from it being possible to hurry it, hurry is fatal to it; it requires to be free from the sense of haste. It must have its quiet seasons in which to stand off, to lie fallow, to store its resources, to adapt them to its own inner construction. So alone can be built up and trained a cultivated insight, an intellectual conscience. Nothing can take the place of a process such as I have described. You will not, I know, be yourselves deceived into thinking that you have acquired such a faculty of critical judgment by the delight that you here, at Oxford, enjoy in appreciating this judgment as it is exercised, on your behalf, by those who lecture to you. They have won it in various degrees—won it by no rapid process, but by years of patient and unskimped labour. And now that they have it, you can appreciate its exercise in them. You can follow them as they skilfully disclose to you what is excellent and lovely in the great standard glories of literature or art; you can follow the brilliant discoveries exhibited to you by the scientific professors: you can see how and why and wherefore the events all happened as they did, as you listen to the student of history, who lays out before you the causes, the motives, the councils that were at work in and about the changing circumstances of the times.

Yes: this is delicious, this is helpful. But you will not suppose that you have, by your appreciation of this skill when exercised by others, acquired the art to exercise it for yourself. You can follow his judgment, but you will come to speedy grief if you try to follow your own. You can see quickly what he means, as he passes you over the ground by which he has reached his conclusions. But that is quite another matter from being able to do that which he did for yourself.

"Ah, Mr. Ruskin!" said an over-ready disciple to our

Oxford teacher, "the first moment that I entered the gallery at Florence I saw at once what you meant in asserting the supremacy of Botticelli." "Did you? in a moment? Dear me!" answered the master. "And it took me twenty years to find it out."

That is a story to remember. What it emphasizes is the contrast which I would beg you to keep in mind between the capacity to understand and enjoy the truths that another has discovered and the actual possession of the critical faculty by which the other discovered those truths.

It is the first of these which can be widely and rapidly diffused. Many can quickly appreciate and delight in the precious discoveries that high study wins; and, again, mechanical devices can richly assist mankind at large, by diffusing far and wide the apprehension of these discoveries. All this is possible, it is good; let us recognise it to the full. But the study that goes to bring about those discoveries! Oh, do not let us for a moment suppose that, in a matter like that, we shall ever do very much to hasten the pace or to widen the range. The few will still, alone, do it, the few who have the special and rare gifts for the labour. The few will do it; and they will always do it slowly.

The intellectual conscience—that is our first exception, and the very term suggests carrying our thoughts further. For the phrase is chosen in order to declare that this temper of the scholar has a distinctly ethical value. It is moral qualities that go to its making. In its own field of literary excellence it is exercising, in its discrimination between good and bad work, a power akin to conscience in its judgment over right and wrong. That fineness and delicacy of intellectual apprehension, that literary sensitiveness, that haunting pursuit of ideal excellence which constitute the scholar—these are a display of character; and character is a moral growth. And, my brethren, is not this a sufficient reason why the growth of the student must be slow? For all moral character is slow in

its formation. Here, again, we touch a region in which we are forced to lay aside all hopes of any great increase of pace in the work. No mechanism can accelerate the speed, just because we are concerned with an interior growth, for which all mechanical external means must be hopelessly inadequate. Effort from within, self-determined effort—this is the essence of the business. Nothing can excuse us it. Effort, prolonged into a self-determined habit, this is the very heart of all moral character. And habits are slow to grow.

And then, again, the growth of character involves for fallen man the purging of some evil ingrained matter, the recurrent struggle for a hard-won freedom. Ah! and this recurrence will be wearily long, and this struggle bitterly slow. Yes; the winning of a good conscience, of a high character, this is a work which lies beyond the frontier within which we may expect to see the victories of speed or the rigid possibilities of diffusion. And is it not because of the failure to recall this that we have been subject to much vain illusion, followed by much angry disappointment? The rapid diffusion of knowledge has again and again tempted us to expect an equally rapid diffusion of virtue. Knowledge ought to have moral effects, so we felt sure; and we were right, only we failed to allow for the difference in pace. Knowledge might flash in upon the dark places; but the moral regeneration which the light of knowledge was bound to evoke, ah! how terribly it lagged behind! how pitifully scanty the fruits that we reaped! how heart-breaking the relapses! Again and again it would seem as if nothing had been changed at all by the wider knowledge, so slow, so broken, so ragged, was the advance. Yes, slow, broken, ragged, laggard—that it was; but that it must be—why be disheartened? why be staggered? Diffused knowledge is one thing, moral regeneration is another. The first is attainable by help of mechanical speed, the other is bound to reject such help. The diffusion of knowledge widens and aids the possibilities of moral regeneration. This

is its supreme importance. But the possibilities have yet to be realized and attained; and that attainment cannot but be difficult, wearisome, uneven, slow. It cannot be done in the mass; it must be done man by man, will by will, individual by individual; it must be done by the painful effort, which by laborious recurrence succeeds at last in building up a new moral habit. Why be so surprised to find that this is very long, or very slow? No; let us never be beguiled into supposing that anything of deep moral worth can be rapidly manufactured. The upward thrust of the power that builds up our moral character is bound to be gradual, monotonous, prolonged. The forces that feed it are deep, and lengthy, and far-fetched. Slowly the moral fabric wins its way to strength, to persistence, to fulfilment. Like a tree planted by the waterside, it will not submit to be hurried; it cannot bring forth its fruit except in orderly sequence, and for those who will await the due season. And, my brethren, all the more will this be so when we come to its finest and rarest issue—the spiritual character of the perfected Christian.

Slow, indeed, and long will be the preparatory discipline before the height can be reached. There will be patient, recurrent effort, and serious and untiring industry, and love that waits and watches, and courage that purges and prunes, and secret faithfulness that drinks deep of the beneficent water through hidden roots. All this is a slow business. And in its highest form it will always be attained only by the few. It will be rare in the gifts and opportunities; rare in endurance, and severity, and persistence, and resolution. Very rare! And this is why I would venture to remind you of the peril that must beset us. In a day of rapid diffusion we are sure to be tempted to undervalue anything that cannot be easily and speedily manipulated, anything that cannot be turned to the obvious and immediate profit of great multitudes. We shall be tempted to regard the average; and wide and quick diffusion of knowledge raises and enlarges the general average.

An immense mass of people are made the better by it. The better! That is what diffusion does. And that is its justification. The better; yes. But no one of them all can by such a process be brought up to the level of the very best.

And yet, good as it is for many to be bettered, believe me, we cannot afford in most matters to go without the very best. It would be a terrible day if we were once content with a fair average character all round, and cared not at all for those few rare, perfect souls who make for some high spiritual goal far beyond our ken, and win out of some secret treasure-house of God a moral beauty, incomparable and unique. Like stars, single and bright, they are alone in the night. They break out in sudden loveliness, like fair flowers amid the common grass. Alone they seem, and separate; and yet they are of us, they are ours, their gifts shed honour upon all. The dark night itself is made glorious by the stars that shine in it. The meadow-grass wears its green more honourably for the flowers that rarely stud it. Separate, high, wonderful souls! These we must have among us; these we must prize above all. They are the salt of the earth. They preserve to mankind its dignity, its purity, its tone. By them standards are upheld; banners are lifted; trumpets are blown; men's hearts are moulded; lives are transfigured; souls are thrilled. No diffused average of intelligence and goodness would compensate for the loss of these few, who are the saints of God.

One name will you suffer me to recall—the name of one who combined in himself all the special excellences on which we have dwelt? Richard William Church, the late Dean of St. Paul's, had that exquisite touch of the finished scholar of which we spoke; and this excellence of the scholar was obviously in him the outcome of qualities that were distinctively moral in character; and, again, this moral temper clearly, in him, proceeded out of a background of spiritual forces—forces that were definitely religious in origin, in motive, in aim, in

aspiration. There he was, the perfected type of an intellect and a will surrendered to the discipline of Christ; and as we looked on him and lived by his side, we knew well that his peculiar grace was worth more, far more, to the world at large than it could ever fully gauge—more, far more, than all the minor average excellences that were strewn thick around us. These we must have, no doubt. But his rare loveliness—ah! that was our inspiration, our necessity. That was priceless: it could not be had for rubies or for coral. To have seen it and known it was for hundreds an ideal that changed all their estimate of life. No accumulation of lower attainments in the many could have done for mankind what this one spiritual achievement effected by its solitary supremacy.

Yet who could look at it and doubt how slow had been the process by which it had been won—how slowly and how patiently the tree had grown by the waterside before, in its due season, it had brought forth its fruit?

Dearly beloved, it is not, you know well, that I do not desire to see you utilize to the widest extent all the opportunities and power that speed can bring to men in the mass. God's blessing be on this marvellous gift of speed that can spread abroad so far and so easily the treasures that of old were so confined or partial in their use. Only I desire that in doing one good thing you should not suppose that you had done another. And I would challenge you here in God's sight—in the name of Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God—not to forget, or ignore, or despise the pearls of great price that must, perforce, be slow in their making, and cannot but be rare in their perfection.

You will not, I beseech you, ever coarsely undervalue the precious gifts of which we have spoken together this morning in Oxford—the scholar's insight, the trained delicacy of the moral character, the spiritual wisdom of the saint! Rather, by what you have learned here, you will better estimate the wonder of those high and special excellences, even as those

who have climbed above wood and upland in the Alps, and have touched the skirts of the higher snows, know better than when they crept along the valleys the mystery of that silence in which the great peaks abide, awful and withdrawn. You will learn here how to reverence more fitly that which is best. You will have a standard by which to recognise how fine and rare it is. You will be hushed into humility. Nay, you will be humbly stirred to wonder whether you yourself may not, after long labour and unhurried discipline, be taught to taste a little of those deep waters, on whose banks these calm and patient trees are planted, which never fail to bring forth their fruit in due season.

OUR LORD'S PARABLES.[1]

"And the disciples came, and said unto Him, Why speakest Thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand."—MATT. xiii. 10-13.

ALL of us are drawn towards Jesus in the character of the homely and simple teacher, of Him who spake to the multitudes as none other ever spake; and there is no occasion on which this presentation of Him is more attractive, and more welcome than when He went out of the house and took His seat in the boat by the sea-shore, while the whole crowd gathered together on the shore, and He opened His mouth and

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 6th, being the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1891.

"spake unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow." How easily we seem to mingle with the throng! how quickly from our very childhood we have felt the beauty of the scene! how familiar it is, how human, how sympathetic! Here is no barrier of stiff theological formula to fence us off, no dogmas uplifted to warn us that trespassers will be prosecuted. We simply gather in the open air by the sea-shore with the mixed crowd. They and we come and go as we will; there we sit, and we are glad enough to be there, so long as the tones of that voice are in our ears; glad enough and satisfied if only He will go on telling us story after story of the kingdom of heaven—stories so characteristic of Him and of His ways, so simple, so vivid, so incomparable: of the sower who went forth sowing, of the tares sown amid the wheat, of the reapers that gathered into the barns, of the mustard seed which grew from a tiny seed to be a tree in which birds make their nests, of the hidden leaven working in the three measures of meal. Such stories as these pass straight from heart to heart; for, indeed, they have in them the significance that belongs to all daily duties and labour, which has continued from seedtime to harvest since the world began. All such acts, in all lands, under all skies, have a dignity and a pathos about them which appeal to our common humanity. We can feel it as we lean over a gate perhaps in some kindly holiday and gaze on the old work, while man wins his daily food from the soil or the sea—the sower sowing the seed, or the reaper gathering in the corn, or the fisherman drawing his net to shore. So it was when life was young; so it will be to the end, and as we look we can forget the troublous present. Here before our eyes is the enduring toil which knows no change, the toil that underlies all the shifting centuries; here it still is just as of old, if only we could be contented to drop all our differences and surrender ourselves once again to the simple industries of simple men. How calm, how deep, the peace here, as we lean and look at the sower who

goes out to sow, at the reaper who binds the wheat into sheaves!

To some such feeling our Lord appeals in the parables as He turns our thoughts back to all that is most plain and primitive and natural in the daily life of human toil. Just because these stories lay hold with such direct force upon the immemorial and elementary simplicities of our common existence, therefore it is that they carry with them such a universal appeal. They, too, suffer no change, any more than the scenes which they embody. Other things may be difficult to transport from their original surroundings, and to adapt to novel circumstances; but all men sow and reap, and fish and beg, and buy and sell, and store in barns, and give feasts, and hire labourers, and marry and are given in marriage; and all races therefore are ready to enjoy the charm of our Lord's parables. This is one side of the picture.

But then, just as we are settling down to this easy and happy view of things, just as we think how well it would have been if theology had but been content to present to us this beautiful vision of Jesus and His preaching as He sat in the boat and spake in parables, lo! it is no crabbed theologian of later days, but the gracious Teacher Himself who arrests us with a sudden word; our dream is roughly shattered by the words of my text, as they reveal what is passing in His mind He, it would seem, is not at all content to sit in a boat and tell parables; it is not for that that He is come on earth: He has other and deeper aims; He is pursuing a severer toil; some awful secret is being held in reserve, and only because so few can bear it and even listen to it without damage, only so is He reduced to speaking in parables. Parables, we learn, are not the full and adequate vehicle of the truth. No, they are but tentative experiments on those who are without—on those who are, as yet, unfit, untested, untrained. Parables are, so to speak, forced upon the Lord. They are His only method of dealing with this loose mob that is following Him.

He cannot venture to confide to them His full mind, for it would but confuse and repel them. So long as it was His disciples, He could address them openly, as in the Sermon on the Mount, with plain, strong directions. So it had been, apparently, at the first; but now that His fame had spread, now that a mixed multitude is swarming around Him—He is driven to protect His doctrine from degradation, misunderstanding, confusion. We may remember some of the strong words of warning spoken by Himself on the mount as to the peril of giving that which is holy unto dogs. In those words He recognised the responsibility of the teacher for his hearers. It is not enough that he has in his hands pearls to give; he must see to it, also, that he distributes them aright to those that will profit by them.

So the parables express the guarded caution with which the great revelation of the Father must be made. It is not enough that God should reveal His love for fallen man; but more than that, He must do it in a way of condescension to all the gradations of darkness into which men have fallen. Here is the irony of the terrible passage quoted by our Lord from Isaiah in answer to the wondering question of the disciples why He should speak in parables. Why in parables? Because so many, though they willingly listen, are in such a state that, hearing they hear not, and seeing they see not; it is because "this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes are closed, lest at any time, seeing with their eyes, and hearing with their ears, they should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." "Lest they should be converted, and I should heal them." That is the dreadful thing that would happen; that is the dreadful thing that they are bent on postponing. If it were not for the obstructions they have themselves interposed, the whole work might be done and over there would be no need for the weariness and the pain of God's infinite patience as He lingers long, knocking at the

door that will not open; lingers on, planning, contriving, scheming, how even yet He may force an entry past bolt and bar—no need for all that, no need for care and forethought in the ministry of the truth if men had been ready to hear the truth; if their hearts had been alert, it would all have been achieved at a stroke, the world have been won. But our Lord seems to say, "Men seem determined to put God to greater pain than ever; they have determined not to yield; they have stopped their ears; they have made themselves unready, repugnant and hostile, lest they should be converted there and then, and should find themselves healed." That is the irony of love picturing the postponement of the good it brings: and since the facts are so, since men have determined that the process of their salvation shall be slow and difficult and gradual, therefore Christ has conformed to their ways; He has qualified the blinding light, He has shadowed it down to the dusk in which men abide; He has divided His teaching into stages, so as to protect these obstinate hearts against their own prejudices; He has fallen back on these parables. The parable is just the teaching that is convenient for those who hear and yet hear not, who see and yet see not. Something they hear—a picturesque tale, a lively image; this is attractive, there is no one who will not give it some entry. Even those who most vehemently repudiate the more emphatic message, even those who might in indignation take up stones to kill Him if they heard the full claim, will stand and listen to these parables; and if they listen, and are pleased to walk away without further question, no irremediable harm will be done, only they will be much as they were before, only they will postpone the day of possibility, they will not have been brought up near enough to the fire to be scorched by it, they will have been saved the uppermost disaster. But, on the other hand, if there are any there who have ears to hear and eyes to see, then the parable will work its perfect work upon them; they will never be satisfied by its mere beauty; they will feel the

prickings of a diviner secret, the parables will quicken and animate them into more eager expectation; something in them will provoke them: they will be restless until they have gone farther: they will press in with the other disciples into the house with the Master; they will insist on being told what it all means: "Declare unto us the parable, Who is the sower that scattered the seed? What are the tares? What is this harvest when the bundle will be burned?" And it is these persistent, clamouring questioners to whom it is given to know the mysteries of heaven. These will ask and knock; and asking will receive, and knocking it will be opened unto them. To those that have the energy to seek, to them more will be given. Blessed will be their eyes, for they will see that which kings and prophets before them desired to see; blessed will be their ears, for they will hear that which their own souls have long hungered after through weary times of silence. Blessed are they to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Now there is the change from our first conception of the parable. We had fancied that by listening here we had got rid of all the difficult barriers that hedge round the truth; and, lo! it is these parables themselves that are the hedge. They hedge off the unready; they encompass the mount that burns with fire lest any living thing should rashly come too near and perish; and far from being intended to satisfy us by their pleasant teaching, and save us the trouble of harder problems, their primary purpose is to compel us to be dissatisfied with their simplicity, to force us to break through this graceful screen that holds so much concealed behind, to insist upon entering within the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. The parables are a sieve through which our Lord passes all who come to Him. If we do as so many are inclined to do, if we remain on the level of the parable, and say, "That is enough for me; let the revelation of Christ stop there; let me listen to these simple moral stories, and not be bothered with more

difficult and precise inquiries," then the parable has failed to fulfil its office upon us; it has only served to mark us off as unfit for more, as those who hearing do not hear. This only it has done for us, it has spared us the risk of a deadlier sin, the risk of some violent repudiation of the truth; it has deferred the day of deadly decision. But God grant that we may not so hang back in this impotent indolence! God grant that we may not so miss His good purpose as we, too, listen with the crowd on the sea-shore! We will not stop our ears to the questions that assail us; we will keep asking ourselves "Who is He that so speaks? What is His authority? How is it that He is so quietly assured of this awful message of deliverance? How does He know so exactly the mind of the Father, and claim to represent it with such assurance? Why does He stand out so separate, so supreme? And what is this kingdom of heaven about which He speaks so confidently? And why is He alone aware of its nature and its laws? This kingdom—where is its gate by which we may enter? When did it begin, and how, and where? Who is this Lord? and how can He be found?" Every word that this strange Teacher preaches rouses up in those who think these importunate agitations. They cannot listen and not want to know more; they cannot go so far and not desire to go farther. To accept Christ with His claims and His wonders, and not to be driven to ask who He is—that is the one impossibility for all honest seekers. No; at all costs they will press round that house where He is, enter inside with Him, as we feel sure there is more to be known. Look at His face as He closes the preaching and passes through the door of His home. How that face yearns to tell us something yet! What secret is He holding back? What is the mystery of His presence? Who art Thou, Lord? Who art Thou? Who is He? That is the one demand that grows stronger and more intense with all those who have ears at all to listen to the preaching of Christ. We must ask it, and, once asked, the question must

be faced and answered. It may conceal itself for a long time, even in some parable, but at last it will make itself felt of all.

Let us think of our own case. We have drawn near, perhaps, without any clear motive; we find ourselves within the sound of His voice; it may be habit that has brought us to church; we have always gone to service; we have grown up that way, and see no reason to change; the habit is enduring, and it is pleasant, and Sunday after Sunday we sit with the throng and listen, and like those on the sea-shore at Galilee we are gratified, soothed, and contented as the word of the Lord is uttered; we listen and admire; we know that great things are being spoken of; much is told us in service or in sermons, and it all sounds nigh and wonderful; we should like to be in that kingdom, and are glad to hear of it; we grow familiar with its language, with the pictures of its doings; we almost seem to be concerned with it, and we enter into interests which are evidently so vivid and so glorious. So this habit is to us just what the parable was to them of old. It is good, for it has brought us near to Jesus; but does it never occur to us to ask very seriously: "What do all those strong words mean exactly to me? This kingdom, these blessings of God, this wonderful work about which they talk —can I give it any actual and precise meaning? Can I say really what it comes to? Can I speak about this kingdom and its King, and yet leave it all so hazy and vague? Who is He, the King? and what does He do for me? Can I put it nto words? To what does He pledge me? What demands does He make on my life? This Sower, has He verily sown His seed in me? and with what issue? And if I can hardly tell for myself whether He has or not, will He Himself tell me if I follow Him into the house?" Do not those questions start in us? In some dim way do we not recognise the necessity of taking a step farther than we have yet made into the knowledge of our own souls, into the knowledge of our Lord and Master?

Some, no doubt, there are who begin their religious life with this direct question: "Who art Thou, Lord?" They have never perhaps thought of Christ until He has met them face to face with the irresistible alternative, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." If so, then that has been their hour of judgment and conversion—sharp, abrupt, decisive. But to most of us religious life has begun in parables. We have hung about Christ's footsteps for a long time, either through habit, or because of some attraction, because of the musical service, because of the beauty of the church. All this may have gone on before the imperative question has fastened upon us, "Do I know?" "Do I believe?" "Am I converted?" The question may not have been put, but it is there biding its time. Jesus is not yet satisfied; He is waiting behind the parable to be known, to be pursued, to be found out. Into the house He wants us to go for Him; He is longing for us to beseech Him with an anxious, insistent cry, "Declare unto me this parable; let this gospel news be no longer as words that float dreamily in my ears, as the sound of a pleasant tale, or music of him that playeth well on an instrument: no, declare it unto me; let it tell on my life, my heart, my acts. Who art Thou, Lord? And what is it Thou wilt have me to do?" That should be always the test of our religious condition; day by day, year by year, we should be growing less contented with anything short of this direct personal contact with the Lord Christ. No vague language about the Church should content us; no, for Christ Himself is the Church, the Church is His kingdom, and therefore we must get at Him, we must find Him, not merely listen to some parable of His, not hear something about Him, not enjoy some reflection of Him, not come under some indirect influence from Him, not repeat phrases that others use about Him: these are our help to the preparations, but through all this we must be pushing forward until the Christ Himself is disclosed to us; Christ the living source, the object of our worship; Christ, the living

presence, interceding at our altars; Christ, the Master of our souls and the Lord of our desires. Though these will involve difficult questions and harder problems still, we have to press on to this one conclusion, drawing ever nearer, by God's grace, to the day when He will no more speak unto us in parables, but will Himself show us plainly the Father; that day when we shall believe not on another's report, but for ourselves, that He is indeed come forth from God; that day when the living Christ shall put out His hand upon us, and His fingers shall close about our souls, and we shall hear Him say, "Thou art Mine, and I am thine: to thee it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."

THE KNOWLEDGE OF LAW.[1]

"Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."—ROM. iii. 20, 31.

ST. PAUL stands at the close of the law. He is reading out to us its ultimate issues. There, at the end of that long history, 1,500 years since the voice spoke on Sinai, under the pressure of the crowding years the logical results of the system have been completely disclosed. It was a sad and barren conclusion. The law (it was now only too clear) the law, "just, and good, and holy" as it was—given by the dispensation of angels, the pride and privilege of a people to whom had been committed the oracles of God—this law of Moses had achieved

[1] Preached at Cambridge on Sunday February 22nd, being the Second Sunday in Lent, 1891.

nothing of what it seemed to promise; it had not carried its holders into that safe and blessed rest to which Joshua pointed; it had left them, after all, outside the land of peace to die in the wilderness. Its hope had been overshadowed from the first by the fate of him who looked out from Pisgah upon a land that he should never enter. We are all familiar enough with St. Paul's vigorous dialectic. We know how he lays fast hold of his conclusion, and sweeps aside all the intervening stages by which that end has been reached. It is the end which determines the significance of all, and the end of the law was absolutely clear and decisive; all that delayed or concealed the ultimate conclusion could be left out of count. In the end, whatever the qualification which might be pleaded, in the end the law had done nothing but force the knowledge of sin. Nay, more than that, it had even provoked unto sin; for sin, taking occasion of the law, had deceived, and by it slain. Thus the law, ordained as it was unto life, had been found in actual practice to be unto death. It had proved itself no free mother, but a very Hagar, a mother of slaves, bearing children only unto bondage, children of mockery, children of the dry and stony wilderness. "By the law shall no flesh be justified." It had only served to prove that "there is none that doeth good, no not one."

But I suppose there is no one who has not at first sight felt this dialectic of the apostle to be forced, extravagant, paradoxical. It seems so strangely inconsistent with the appeals made under the law, with the invocations therein evolved. It sounds to us so profoundly improbable, and so utterly at variance with the obvious and professed purpose with which the moral law stands ever against us, issuing its imperial summons. We recoil from the exaggerated dilemma and antithesis of an argument that is so far from speaking directly home to the natural reason and the native instincts.

And why should we not recoil? Is St. Paul not conscious that he is explaining a paradox? Is he not sensitive of the

strain and struggle of the position which he is so bent on asserting? Surely every syllable writhes, as it were, under the violence of the passion by which the conclusion is extorted from his experience. It is the very last and strangest conclusion that any one could have anticipated, and every epigrammatic antithesis rings with the tone of his own surprise, with the vehemence of his own recoil from the solution at which he is nevertheless compelled to arrive.

Nothing but the forcible experience of centuries could have worked out a position so hopelessly unanticipated. And we, who are sensible of the recoil can only recover from our bewilderment by turning back to that lengthy and historical experience, under the stimulus of which the relentless logic of facts slowly but surely travelled towards this extraordinary result. That experience is recorded for us in the books of the Old Testament, and there we can see how complete is the recognition that this ultimate result of the law was wholly foreign to its primary and open profession. The law had offered itself, as we know, to the Jews under a very different face and with far other promise. Far from entering to condemn, to humiliate, to crush, to slay, it had arrived with everything that could endear it to the men whose breath it kindled and whose spirits it inspired. How strangely pathetic to turn back from St. Paul's despairing cry against this body of death, in which he found himself miserably snared, to the earlier greetings of welcome and joy with which loyal Jewish souls had saluted these very statutes and ordinances which now lay heavy on him as frost!

The law had appealed to all that was most inspiring, most confident, most true, in the human heart. How can it not? For all recognition of law is the proof that the mind of man is of one mould and make with the mind of God the Creator. It is not we who have invented imaginary laws: for if so, events could not, conceivably, correspond to them with sure regularity; nor should we be able to use one law as a basis from

which to discover another. Facts would for ever be upsetting our expectations. But if they do not so disappoint us, if every added year intensifies our certainty of their conformity to our discovered laws, then we are certain that we have hold of the real secret of their motions; and this must mean that our minds can think in something of the way that God's mind thinks; that facts are to us what they are to Him; that we can in our measure enter into His scheme of things, can go behind the mere facts and read their inner mental mechanism, can comprehend to that extent how God does His work.

The discovery of any natural law is, then, an act of admittance within the mind of God. This is what should give its elevation and dignity to scientific knowledge. Through it we should feel ourselves passing into the holy places, we should take our shoes from off our feet, for indeed it summons us nearer to the Most High. Each new science opens, as it were, a door for us into heaven, and through it we hear a voice that calls to us, "Come up hither; I will show you things that are, and are to come."

The knowledge of law then is always, in all its forms, a summons to use all that is strongest and best; our human energy, our courage, our worth, our capacity. By it we hold the key, we win dominion, we make and unmake, we lay our hands upon the wheel of life. Here, indeed, is honour—is delight, is glory for man. And if this is so in the lower rank of physical law, how much more as we mount stage by stage to the high regions of the moral law!

Here still nearer than ever we press in within the hidden secrets of God. Here we not only are summoned to see how He works, but also why He works, His own inner motives, His inspiring devices, His ultimate goal. Here we touch not His works only, but Him Himself. We breathe His breath, we gaze on His image, we taste His satisfaction. We are conscious of the meaning of His love; we are called into the mystery of companionship, of friendship with God. Should

not this send a thrill of joy through the very nerves and fibres of the spirit as it beholds this high door opened into heaven, and the voice cries yet again more securely, more emphatically than ever, "Come up hither: I will show you My Name"? Here, in the cleft of this rock, lifted high above the dim plain, we may hear with head bowed, with soul hushed, the Name of the Lord pass by: "The Lord, merciful and gracious, in having compassion for a thousand, who will by no means clear the guilty."

Such joy there should be to greet the knowledge of the law. And such joy there indeed was—deep, inspiring, inexhaustible joy in welcoming the magnificent appeal. We know it was so; we hear its unending echoes repeated in line after line of Psalm cxix.

The law seemed then no burden, no misery, no spear of conviction, no sword to slay. It was not sin that woke at its voice, and the man that died. Nay; far from it! Sin was for the moment stifled and drowned under the weight of the exceeding glory. Sin died down into momentary silence, and the man woke and lived,—the man, the inner man, on fire with the heat of the new knowledge, rejoicing in the law, burning to respond to its ennobling call, leaping forward to salute, as it were, the face of a friend long desired.

Called to friendship with God, to walk with God, who could withhold his thanks? who could be slow to taste the sweetness of walking in the house of God with a friend? "Oh how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord God of hosts! Blessed is the man in whose heart are Thy ways. One day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. For the Lord gives grace and worship; no good thing will He withhold from him that leadeth a godly life."

How hopeful, how delighted, is the spirit as it clasps that revealed law, and clings to it, and caresses it, and feeds on it, and broods over it, and pours out its grateful praises for the dear, undreamed of boon. "The law of Thy mouth is dearer

unto me than thousands of gold and silver. How sweet are Thy words unto my mouth! yea, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." How it foresees days and years of joy ahead, which shall all be employed in the delicious task of learning and studying, and teaching, and absorbing the entire law! "Oh, teach me Thy statutes. Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy statutes. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I will observe it with my whole heart."

In trouble, in distress, all will be well if only this privilege be left us. "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. I have remembered Thy name, O Lord, in the night season, and have kept Thy word." Yes; pain and distress themselves will be justified if only they lead nearer to this high knowledge. "It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I might learn Thy statutes. Before I was troubled, I went wrong; but now have I kept Thy testimonies."

And still, ever and ever, with the delight of repetition, goes up the recurring petition: "Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Thy statutes! Seek Thy servant, for I do not forget Thy commandments." "O teach me Thy statutes, and I shall observe them even unto the end."

To know the law! to know the right! Surely in such knowledge lies the power to do righteousness. Knowledge is the source of power over the physical world. Knowledge is, surely, the secret of all goodness in the moral world.

So Socrates had said, in the buoyancy of his earliest recognition that man is a law unto himself. Incredible it seemed to him, incredible that a rational man should actually know the good, and not do it.

And the Jew too (though with a far deeper sense of the co-operation that must meet him from the side of God, and of the prayerfulness that therefore must accompany the efforts) still did recognise, with all his heart and soul, the wonder and the light, the force and the splendour of this spiritual know-

ledge. And out of his sense of this wonder he built up an ethical ideal—the ideal of the wise man. The wise man! the man whose soul lies open to the wisdom of God, that wisdom which is more precious than riches, the high lady, in whose right hand is length of days, and in her left riches and honour: whose ways are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths are peace. In her is a spirit holy, subtle, clear, undefiled, loving the thing which is good, kind to man, steadfast, free from care, "who passeth through all these by reason of her presence: she is the breath of the power of God, the brightness of the everlasting life, the unspotted mirror of His power, the image of His goodness. So high she is, so pure, and yet she opens herself out to men. In all ages, entering into holy souls, she maketh them friends of God." "God loveth none but him that dwelleth with wisdom."

The good man is the wise man. And by the wise man we mean one who responds, with intelligent appreciation, to the opportunities laid open to him: he is one who knows the value of what is offered him, and spares no pains to attain it; he deems all effort and industry worth while, if they insure him possession of the one thing needful. He answers, from his side, to the advances made on the side of God; he is trained, alert, on the watch; he makes himself ready beforehand for the Wisdom who is travelling towards him; he seeks for her as a queen and mistress above all things. She crieth at the gates and in the streets, and he hears her; she spreadeth her merchandise, and he is eager to buy; she layeth out her feast, and mingleth her wine, she sendeth out her maidens, she crieth upon the highest places of the city: "Who is simple, let him turn in hither; come, eat of my bread, and drink of my wine, which I have mingled": and the wise know her voice, and sit at her table, and eat and drink in gladness of heart.

Patiently they follow her, they listen, they learn; no life is long enough to exhaust her instructions; they cling to her they throw into the blessed task the industry of the student

the keenness of the merchant, the fascination of the explorer, the devotion of the lover. They bind her law upon their foreheads; they write it upon the table of their hearts; they say to Wisdom, "Thou art my sister!" they store up her treasures in books of proverbs—the records won out of all times and seasons of her counsels, her statutes, her ordinances. These are transmitted from father to son; they build up an inherited science of moral direction: for wisdom, they know, is the principal thing, therefore they must get wisdom, and with all their getting they must get understanding. And ever the voice calls to them, "Take fast hold of instruction, let not her go, keep her, she is thy life."

The good man is the wise man; he has all the characteristics of them that know; his moral tone is of the same calibre and temper as belongs to a man of trained and wide intelligence; he is as one who moves about in a world that he understands; he observes all, from the cedar of Libanus to the hyssop on the wall; he notes how all is sweetly ordered in wisdom, from end to end: and he, too, enters into that sweet and lovely order; he, too, walks in free obedience to law; he is perfectly in place, adapted to all emergencies, true to every direction, skilled in meeting all accidents; he moves through life as if of it, he and it are friends, he is in possession of its secret; nothing can upset, disturb, confuse, destroy him. He amasses all steadfast experience, he gathers instruction from every side, in his steps he is not straitened, in his running he does not stumble. And all this is no mere intellectual shrewdness. It is the issue of a religious surrender to the sway of an authoritative Wisdom whom he loves, and understands through loving, and imagines in himself by love, beaming as she is, "sweet, tender, kindly, gracious, noble, calm, secure," powerful, moving in the force of that purity of love, into which no defiled thing can enter, by which she is the unspotted mirror of the goodness of God.

Such is the wise man as they picture him; and over against

him they drew that memorable counter-picture, the character of the fool. As virtue is taken under the head of knowledge, so vice is seen to be folly. The sinner is the fool—the man who understands nothing about himself, or his place, or his office, or his end; who has never opened his eyes upon the wonderful scene through which he is passing, never has caught a glimpse of its uncovered secret. In vain for him Wisdom spreads her feast: in vain she stands at the entry of the city, crying aloud, "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man." But no: the fool sees nothing, hears nothing. It is too much trouble: he is sluggish, gross, lazy. "Yet a little sleep he must have; a little slumber, and a little folding of the hands to sleep." The fool is the man who is too silly to take things seriously, too silly to be in earnest. There is no stuff in him, no substance: nothing to rely upon. It is all dissipated in idleness, in frivolity; it slips through your hands. The fool is a rope of sand, there is no getting hold of him.

And then he is so dull, so unresponsive, so blank. No intelligence lightens through him. He remains dull-eyed, cold, stupid, when all round him things move swiftly. You cannot wake him up to perceive or understand. He is at his worst when things about him are at their best. The deeper or higher the subject the less it appeals to him. He is out of all touch with the realities of life; you do not know what to do with him; he oppresses you as a weight. What is heavier than lead? and what is his name but a fool?

And into this empty, frivolous brain enter all bad imaginations. He knows nothing of any right way in which to walk, and therefore he is sure to stumble into the wrong. Any deceit takes him in, all things that misguide have him as their easy prey. If the good life be indeed the careful and laborious business which we have seen it to be, a matter demanding the most urgent and serious study, then the fool is bound to make a mess of it, is bound to come to grief. He must get tangled

in its intricate machinery ; and if he does, then there is a stern issue. Life is in earnest, it has a work set before it ; these encumbrances, these shiftless obstructions, it cannot away with. It must push them aside, expel them, crush them. He that despiseth his life shall die. "Judgments are prepared for scorners, and stripes for the back of fools."

Above all, the fool who is deaf to the voice of the Lady Wisdom as she spreadeth her feast and furnisheth her tables, hears, alas ! too plainly another inviting voice, the voice of the strange woman which flattereth with her words. She who is without in the streets, whose mouth is smoother than oil, but whose end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. After her he goeth, stupid and blind "even as an ox goeth to the slaughter," light and frivolous as a "bird that hasteth to the snare," and "knoweth not that her house is the way to hell, going down to the chamber of death."

The wise man and the fool !

These are twin portraits, that have an abiding value. At all times of advanced culture they resume their place, as typical expression of the contrast between good and evil, in the form in which that contrast most effectively strikes our cultivated imagination. They reach us, as we know well, through other channels than the Jewish Law. They are graven upon the memories of all educated men by the exquisite handicraft of Hellenic philosophy ; and again and again, in days like our own, when the perfection of literary art once more puts out against us the peculiar force of its fascination, these two types tend to embody for many of us the ultimate word of ethics. Our final arguments in answer to the question, What claim has virtue upon my conscience ? would only be given in the retort, "Look on this picture and on that ! Look at the wise man and the fool, and can you hesitate in which direction your choice lies ?" Goodness is wisdom ; it corresponds, in the department of conduct, to that which, in every other department of life, marks the action of the intelligent and

skilful man. Any one who, in these other regions, plays the part of the man of intelligence and work will and must, when he arrives on this ethical ground, if he be consistent with himself, be and do good. Any one who, in matters of conduct and intention, does wrong, is exhibiting that manner and temper and character which, in every other department of life, we should recognise and stamp at once, without a moment's hesitation, as the work of the ignorant fool.

There is the familiar canon, the standard; we feel its reassertion going on all about us to day: there are whole sections of educated society where it is practically dominant. And its profound value is not to be denied. Nay; it stands there before us, in the proverbial books of the New Testament, sanctioned and upheld by Divine authority. It is not, indeed, the last word, it is but a stage in the ethical education through which our sacred books carry us; but it is drawn out into peculiar prominence, it is a marked moment, and, moreover, it has much still to say to us. It is never to be dropped; it contains one of the richest and deepest deposits which we Christians inherit from the earlier dispensation.

Only, in our use of this deposit, we have ever to remember that a moral convulsion has intervened between us and it; the convulsion that interprets itself to us through the vehement language by which St. Paul drags us out of our genial confidence under "the law," and forces us into the humiliation that waits on grace. That earlier ideal belongs to the ethical system which he sums up in the name which, to him, symbolises everything that belongs to a righteousness won by man himself, by his own moral behaviour, by his own loftiness of will, by his own eager response to the inviting voice of God, in the name of "the law." It was an ideal perfect, right and complete in itself, "just and true and holy." But its attainment had, long ago, been undermined from within; there was a flaw far down, a crack which must disclose itself, in the secret will of man, to which the ideal appealed with so much open

and energetic hopefulness; and the higher the ideal, the severer became the strain on the resources which alone could accomplish it; and as that strain sharpened, the flaw must start, the crack must widen and spread; the failure was bound to become more and more evident; palpable, inevitable, miserable, there was no hope of final achievement by that road; if this formula covered all the conditions, the effort was made under a doom of fatal defeat. There could be but one issue, the conviction of impotence.

It is not my purpose to enter into the argument of St. Paul, by which he so passionately justifies his position, that we cannot content ourselves with this moral idea as our final point of arrest, without being utterly false to the cross of Christ and to the significance of grace. But we may, at least, to-day remind ourselves of the intense reality of the dialectic, which is so apt to sound to us as forced and unmeaning, by recalling that through that vehement argument he has effected the transition which changed the ethical ideal from that of the wise man and the fool to that of the saint and the sinner! "The saint and the sinner!" What a different world of association do the two words call up! What a transformation of atmosphere! We have passed out of one climate into another: it is a changed land, with new lights and colour, and fruits and flowers.

Yea; and that change, so vividly felt, is the measure of the reality which St. Paul so doggedly enforced. Not for nothing did he spend himself in emphasising the radical and vital difference between law and grace, if, under one system, the moral argument culminated in the antithesis between the wise man and the fool; and, under the other, in the antithesis between the saint and the sinner.

Yet, decisive as was the change, the content of the older ideal is all taken up, and re-found in the new. It is not lost, for Christ does not destroy, but fulfils even that which He displaces. It is true that the texture of the saint is shot

through with the strands of penitence and of passion which were impossible to the wise man. His goodness has its springs in sources that run down into depths of inner being, which were left untouched and undiscovered by the earlier wisdom. It is the root and origin of his character which is especially affected ; it is there, in its innermost recess, where the flaw lay which wrecked his earlier hope ; and it is there, where the grace arrives to rescue, and to renew his broken hope. And, no doubt, the mere fact that the character springs from a changed source tells upon the development of the character throughout, and endows it with those special hues and tones and fragrance which make the saint differ at every point from the type given us in the portrait of the good wise man. Yet the main features of the old character are all included in the new—the righteousness which marks the man under grace contains within it the righteousness sought under the law.

And therefore, my brethren, goodness is still wisdom. Christ has altered nothing here, however much He has transformed the mode of attaining it.

The good man, under grace, has still all the characteristics that were defined in time of old. He has the stamp upon him, so far as he is good, of everything that is intelligent, human, manly, rational, strong, and capable. Do we not recognise this plainly enough, as St. Paul, the very apostle who drove us to alter our standpoint, and formulated for us the new motive, impresses upon us, in epistle after epistle, the features, as he conceives them, of the new man, remade in Christ Jesus ?

How sane, and robust, and sound, and complete is the character upon which he insists ! The broken and contrite heart, that has become dead to itself and that has cast itself into the paradoxical and passionate experiences that lie summed up in the phrase, "I live ; yet not I, Christ liveth in me," comes out of that struggle—out of that agony of penitence—

in no guise of fanatical extravagance. No; it manifests itself in disciplined and careful self-control, sober, watchful, kindly, peaceable, gentle, and restrained! How St. Paul insists on the practical virtues of the gentleman! He is ever requiring courtesy, steadiness, forethought. He dwells on the moral excellence of all that is sure-footed, balanced, proportioned. He abhors all disorder, rashness, haste, self-assertion, all that is violent, puffed up, and vaporous. He demands quietness, and loving-kindness, and goodness, and patience. He requires of a man that he should go about his business with the earnest sobriety of a man who has a work in hand, for which he must buy up all serviceable occasions. He must be one who never forgets to give others their due; who waits on the work; who treats all with equal honour; who respects the diversity of gifts; who gives much and takes little. He must be one who never behaves himself unseemly; seeks not his own; is not easily provoked; thinks no evil; endures all things; hopes all things; does all for the edification of the body.

How wise and wholesome it all is! Wholesome! The very word which seems to fill St. Paul's later imagination, as he speaks his farewell charges to the Church which he must so soon leave alone. He prays them, with urgent repetitions, to preserve the wholesomeness of doctrine, of life, of habit, the moral soundness of the healthy will! Is not this the wise man still?

Goodness, in its content, is still as ever, perfect wisdom. It must have in it, and about it, all the marks of intelligence, such as of old the Proverbs defined. Grace works it in us, through the way of penitence. There is the difference! It is the righteousness that comes of God only—not our own, but the gift of God in us, through the pardoning efficacy of Christ! But, for all that, it is righteousness still; the standard is not lowered but raised; a character is demanded from us, which still, in its proper development, retains all the sense and wholesome strength of the wise man. Therefore it is that

the formation of the Christian character is not merely a sudden conversion of the heart, but, springing out of this, a lengthy and laborious task, requiring the care of self-inquiry and the rules and discipline of many a recurring Lent, before God can carry out in our reluctant soul His full and perfect work.

And the portrait of the fool! Does not that, too, preserve its significance?

We have, indeed, a new message to the sinner, which exhibits the love of a Father, whose patience and pardon not even the folly of the fool can disgust or exhaust.

Yes. But be sure of it. Sin is still folly; the sinner is, as much as ever, the great fool. That which the Jew saw we see still, though now we are taught by Christ to break through the contempt and the anger which such folly naturally provokes, and we are given the power, from Him, to love the human soul against whom we feel so irritated, but for whom God sends His Son to die. Ah, yes. Not only that; our irritation drops from us, for we are too near him ourselves.

The folly of the sinning fool! It is in us. We know it well. If we have at all broken away from the folly, it is only because we have been caught up out of the foolishness to which we madly clung, and have received some touch of that wisdom which is not our own righteousness, but that which comes from above.

This must force out of us all that relentless contempt with which the older generation read the condemnation of "the fool." But the picture is as true as ever. Rather, since Christ came and threw His light on the scene, the folly of sin is more obvious, more down-right than ever. This is its pathos, that it is so foolish. If ever we go outside our own temptations and look on at others sinning, there is nothing more obvious to us than this—its utter folly. How pitiful the miscalculation, the misdirection, the perversion, the distortion, the disproportion, the waste! What a dismal tale of folly it is which repeats itself over and over again in the confidences

that reach the ear of the lawyer, the doctor, the confessor! There is such wearisome folly in the monotony with which men travel down the highways of sin, by which they have seen others go down to destruction before their very eyes. Is it drink? is it gambling? Well, we know every step of the road. We can foretell with dreadful accuracy all that will happen! The same stupid story will repeat itself. A man with hope, with bright home, with capacity, with success before him, with everything to make life a joy, throws all to the winds; hope, home, happiness, skill are all shattered, wrecked, in the very way that was foreseen: that is the folly of it! Or the folly of licentiousness. Every one knows it from beginning to end: all the warnings are in view, and yet down the old evil road they still turn! Is any sin encompassed and hedged with such dismal warning? The swarms of men who carry their judgment in their faces, is there not warning enough in them? There they are; every one can see them, can see gross, sinister, sensual looks, so repellent, so cruel, so noisome. Or those others, are they no warning? Depressed, unhealthy, beclouded, woe-begone, sick of some nameless shame. Look at them! Through them, day and night goes up the living protest of nature, her cry of alarm and judgment! and yet, down in the thick of it all, we watch him stepping still, the young man void of understanding—gay, thoughtless, vacant—making his silly mock at sin. He will not see, he will not hear, though heaven and earth are loud with warning. Down he goes, easy, light-hearted. We from outside note, perhaps, how his bright boyishness is dying out of him; how is it? The charm is somehow gone! the fearless eye, the unclouded look! something has happened to him! We feel it; it is his innocence that has fled. He is on the fatal slope. Soon he will be even as those others. He is running into the trap, though it be set in his very sight

> "As a bird, he hasteneth into the snare!
> As an ox, he goeth down blind to the slaughter!"

Oh the pity of it, the pity of it! when he knoweth that the dead are there, and the guests are in the depths of hell.

In all its forms, sin means a misconception of the proportion of things. It is this which condemns so severely the easy-going worldliness, which is clear of those grosser falls, and yet never fastens on life's secret. It is the sin of misconception, of misdirection. Round and above us the great work of God moves, presses forward, and strains to its fulfilment. Eternal issues are at stake; voices call us to the work; angels reach out helping hands; the Spirit urges, beseeches, invites; the mighty temple of God rises layer upon layer, and we may be a stone within its walls! All things are ours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come. We know it, we profess to believe it.

And what are we about? What fleeting interests occupy our attention? On what contemptible littleness is our desire set? What folly it all is! How angry we are with ourselves! For a moment we push aside all that we see to be so frivolous, empty, earthly, the idle, selfish, wilful pre-occupations of our main life! And then the effort dies away, and back they all swarm about us again: and once more we forget all the vision on the mount, and we forget that we are but passengers here towards a heavenly country. Again we are absorbed in the petty, narrow interests that come and go with the fashion of the hour. We set ourselves to no task; we accomplish nothing; we go through the round of social conventions, which we know will leave us exactly where they found us. We are no better, no nearer to Christ's example, no more ready to die than we were. Lost and busy in the thick of occupations that can have no issue, no fruit hereafter, we are as blind as ever to the glory of our eternal destiny in Christ Jesus. And against us—our small vanities, our hollow industry—we know as justly, as inevitably as against him who of old saw nothing to do here but to build barns and lay up treasures for his soul, it is God Himself who utters the sen-

tence: "Thou fool! how can it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

To rescue the soul from this loss, to release it, to recover it, to pluck it out of the snare, to open a passage by which it may escape into air and light and freedom, to save ourselves from making a fatal miscalculation,—that is our Lenten work! That is worth a little pains, a little discipline. And it can be done. That is the blessed news! It can be done, whatever our folly has been, because Wisdom, the Wisdom of God, has drawn near to us, with a far sweeter voice, with a yet more enthralling invocation than ever she came nigh to the Jew of old. Nay; she not only draws near, bidding us come, one and all, to find our peace, but she has entered in within us, and has endowed us with her own vitality and force, and puts out from within our souls her own unflawed will, and pleads from within us, before God, her own unspotted beauty.

Therefore it is that we can make our escape; the snare is broken, and we are delivered. We can, if only we suffer that word of truth to work its way within and without, if only we will surrender ourselves to His handling, who is the wisdom and the power of God.

"THE ONE A PHARISEE."[1]

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee."—St. Luke xviii. 10.

"The one a Pharisee!"—who of us has not a hard word for the Pharisee? He is the religious scarecrow, the butt of everybody's contempt, at whom the whole world can sling its

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 1st, being the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity, 1889.

sarcasms, so easy it is: for the Pharisee has not only committed a crime, but a blunder: he is not only wrong, but he is stupid, he has made himself ridiculous; he is the Malvolio of the spiritual world, with his absurd complacency, his conceits, his self-applause, his forced attitudes, his official grimace, his stiff formalities. Any one can laugh at all that, any one can see how unnatural that is. There is nothing in him that attracts; no glamour of fascination hides his weakness; his faults are all glaring and repellent and offensive; and, above all, to the world is he repulsive. The world, with its light-hearted insincerities, its supercilious good humour, has no key at all to this laborious earnestness of the Pharisee. "What is it all about," it asks, "this toilsome and fatiguing discipline, this priggish scrupulosity? How does any man ever arrive at such a state of petty anxieties and unnatural conventionalisms?" So the easy, wondering world asks, if it stops for a moment to look and laugh at the Pharisee. We all can gird at him, and the more worldly of us, perhaps, gird the loudest. "But our Lord," you will say, "surely our Lord sanctions this universal reprobation of the Pharisee. He it was who taught us so to condemn him; we are but echoing His words. Where, indeed, was He more sharp, more severe, more terrible than when He denounced the Pharisees and the Scribes? With them He even allows Himself irony and scorn. It was He, the Lord, who first let us into the secret of the pharisaic failure, He who first lifted the veil and showed us the inner hypocrisy, showed us how these fair-seeming professors of religion were fair indeed without, but inwardly full of dead men's bones. Surely we cannot be wrong in repeating what we learned from His lips, in echoing again and again, 'Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees!'"

And yet, before taking our Lord's words upon our lips, it would be sometimes well to inquire whether we all have the right to do so. Are the motives with which He spake them our motives? Are we judging by His standards? Are we

standing on His level? and are we in a condition which permits us to pass judgment upon our fellows such as He, the sinless, might pass? Our Lord speaks as He by whom God will judge the world; but it is no light matter to step up into God's judgment-throne and pronounce His "woe unto you!" And when we notice how freely the world, how freely that in us all which is most worldly, discharges its sarcasm and its scorn upon the pedantic formalities of religious Pharisees, it may well make us wonder whether this popular scorn of ours is morally identical with the scorn of Christ. Must not there be some internal moral confusion when that which we cannot but know to be the least Christ-like element in our nature lays claim to speak with the special authority of Christ! And so it may be worth while to ask, "What was the exact significance of our Lord's denunciation of the Pharisees? what was it that gave to His anger against them its special force?" And to answer this we must ask first an earlier question: "What was the Pharisee, that against him such thunders broke? How did it come about? How was it that he had taken to busy himself with these minute matters, this washing of cups and of platters? How had he come to build up this maze of religious scruples, this burden of tradition?" Only by understanding him, only by so entering into his heart and mind, can we at all appreciate his spiritual failure.

Let us see, then, this afternoon, first, what he had done, and what he meant. The Pharisee was the product of a special and unique situation. He was the embodiment of those forces which had carried the Israelites over the terrible centuries which followed the return from Babylon. And this situation was one utterly without precedent in human history before or since. Its general outlines we all profess to know, but perhaps few of us have taken the trouble to measure the peculiar strain which it laid upon the Jewish people. Let us recall it, this situation. The Jew had returned from the captivity a mere remnant. He had indeed re-occupied the historic hill of

Zion, and rebuilt the waste places of Jerusalem, but it was impossible for him to recover or re-establish his ancient condition as a people, with a distinct and exclusive national existence; for, first, in the central section of the land, in the home of patriarchal memories, in the land of Abraham, in the sacred heart of Shiloh, all this remained the seat of his bitterest foes—bitter because most near akin. The Samaritan, who had forfeited the privileges of Israel, had been cast out from the fold of the ransomed of the Lord. And north of these the land was so over-run with heathen populations—Syrians, Greeks, Arabs, Scythians—that it had become so mixed that the keen criticism of the true seed in Judah looked suspiciously at "Galilee of the Gentiles." It was a land that almost "sat in darkness," the old home of Naphthali and Zebulon. And in our Lord's day the great caravans between the seaports and Damascus on the east passed close by Nazareth, and the roads were crowded with trafficking Gentiles; and close above lay Tyre and Sidon, and swarms of mixed blood. And all about Him in His home, Cæsarea Philippi and Tiberias, were foreign cities of alien type, Greek and Roman, with heathen temples and heathen games. And on the east coast of His own lake He would pass a cordon of ten great cities, the Decapolis, with Gentile life, customs, and speech. So the poor remnant found themselves a ragged fragment in a corner of the old country; and, as we know, their old dominion and their old constitution were never recovered. Such government as they won for themselves was of a different type from any that had gone before—a government by governors with licenses from the great king; or, even at the time of their greatest independence, under the Maccabees, the rule formed a violent break from all their historic traditions, for the Maccabees combined the high-priesthood with the kingship, and displaced both the line of Aaron in the priesthood and the line of David in the kingship; and out of this strange amalgamation of governments had arisen the Edomite line of the Herods, mixed in blood, and resting on foreign

authority. And then, finally, even these had vanished under the lordship of Rome, so that not only in far Galilee, or in the heathen cities of the Decapolis, but even in Jerusalem itself, our Lord saw the power of Antonia domineering over the Holy Place itself, frowning with the menace of Roman soldiery. And at Cæsarea, on the coast, was a whole Roman establishment, with its governor and retinue, and theatre, and eagles. So it was at home. How changed from all that was presupposed in the settlement that gave to Israel the land of Canaan for an eternal inheritance! How difficult in such a situation to retain their national type!

And, as yet, we have only recalled the least part of their difficulty; for this remnant of the return was not the largest or the richest, or the most important portion of the holy race. Back in Babylon lived on a strong and powerful colony, proud of their blood, of their wealth, of their learning. With them lived the strictest traditions, with them abode the schools of wisdom, the knowledge of the law, so that the schools at Babylon outweighed, in value and in dignity, those in Jerusalem. And then, again, the policy of Alexander the Great, detecting the commercial quickness of the race, had deliberately planted the Jews down thickly in all the great centres of commerce by which the empire knit itself together. At Damascus, Alexandria, Ephesus, Tarsus, and Corinth, and Rome, there they were sometimes nearly a third of the whole city. And their banking interests were already fast developing, and the gold of the nations was passing through their hands and Jerusalem was poor indeed beside the rich trading communities in Corinth and Alexandria.

Now just think what all that involved, over which we have cast this flying glance. Here was a people whose sacred mission in history was to be exclusive, solitary, and apart. A law had been given them which supposed them to be living close and compact within the tiny compass of the Holy Land, gathering themselves about a certain sacred centre at

Jerusalem, in constant neighbourhood of the temple and its feasts. This law made it a religious duty to keep themselves from Gentile communications, from inter-relations with the heathen. It bent itself to enforce this exclusion by a deliberate enforcement of peculiar social customs, which should make every meal a Jew took a sign of his unique and solitary prerogative. The stamp was set on his food, on his clothes, on every detail of daily life—the stamp which marked him off from the unclean heathen world without. At every turn it met him, that he should never forget it. He was hedged round. "Touch not, taste not, handle not," was the command rung out in persistent warning against all that could socially blend the Jew with the Gentile. And then this law again, as if in fear of his too strong commercial passions, set itself to make elaborate commerce almost impossible. It broke up intricate money relations by a system of jubilees, it cut short complications of long debts, it abhorred usury and interest. And then it throws into the very thick of all commercial transactions the bar of the Sabbath day. The Sabbath—the pledge of loyalty to the covenant—was to be kept as signal witness of God's peculiar relation to this people, holding them marked out and distinct in unmistakable solitude, singled out from all nations; the Sabbath, the test of the Jew's chivalrous adhesion to his God, summoning him week by week to cut across every tie that knit him to his Gentile fellows, to shake himself loose from all encumbering relationships, to retreat within the hidden seclusion which his God kept open for him, even as a hole within a rock, where he might be hidden under the covering of God's hand, and hear Jehovah pass by, and proclaim the name of the Lord. Such was the law; such was their religion. It had world-wide issues, promises, and hopes, which should follow on what was now doing. But for the Jew its one insisting cry was: "Be separate; touch not the unclean thing; hold yourself aloof in meat, in drink, in coming and going, in sleeping and waking, in the house, in the market, in marriage,

and in death; cut yourself off, you, the peculiar people, shut off apart, and be solitary."

Now how was that to be done? All very well while they were huddled together, a compact little body of tribes within the four corners of the Promised Land. There their one duty might be to repel all foreign mixture, all foreign alliance, all alien influences. But now, scattered and broken, and dispersed over the face of the wide earth, from Babylon to Rome, forced into daily, hourly contact with the swarming millions of heathendom, engaged in the intricate complications of a huge and growing commerce, shouldering Gentiles night and day in the streets, far from the holy places, with a thousand new, undreamed of interests springing up on every side, what force was there which could hold them together? How could they retain their national identity, their social separation, their religious exclusiveness?

And let us remember here the powers that were against them. It was the day of universal empires. All the civilizing instincts of humanity had set themselves in the direction of a world-wide empirism which should break down all local barriers, all provincial distinctions, all national peculiarities. Exclusiveness, narrow nationalism—this was the one condemned thing. The interest of the civilized world lay simply in discovering which empire should succeed in making itself world-wide. It was a struggle for the survival of the fittest lord of the whole earth. Assyria, Chaldæa, Egypt, Greece, Rome—which was it to be? That was the fierce, the awful struggle unrolled before the eyes of Ezekiel. And note, again, our poor little tiny people there—who, alone in the world, had the counter-mission, and set itself to hold fast the national distinctions—far from being able to keep clear of the great fray, unobserved in some remote corner, away out of the main scene, had its home in the very heart of the battlefield. That strange ridge of hills to which the Jew clung was the very pivot round which the course of empires turned. Was it

Assyria moving west, or Egypt moving north, or Greece or Rome hurling back the weight of eastern pressure—all must cross Palestine. The swing and the shock of the massive war were bound to be felt in their most tremendous shape on that narrow rim of land that formed the division between East and West, that had all its old story lying behind it in the great roads that led to the East, and yet looked out with all its coasts towards the inland sea whose ships carried, from the isles of the Greeks, all the wealth of the West. So they lay, this strange, unique little people, with this double difficulty, first, that their home was at the very centre where the world-forces against them told most powerfully; and secondly, dispersed away from their home, in the thick of those very cities, founded and enriched by Alexander the Great, which were the embodiment of this world-movement, Alexandria, Corinth, Damascus, and Rome—cities where all nationalities mingled and mixed until they were fused as metals in a caldron, a seething mass of people from out of whose memories had vanished all that was national, or traditional, or immemorial, or distinctive, or hallowed. So they lay, a strange, solitary people, ground, as it were, between two millstones that were bent on crushing out all that was angular or peculiar in temper and religion, in social habit, or in patriotic aspirations. The upper millstone of Greece, with its subtle and delicate spirit, penetrating, subduing—Greece with its irresistible literature, that was sweeping in steady triumph all mankind into one people, with one speech; and the lower millstone of Rome, with its godlike supremacy, its awful advance, its gift of dominion, its dreadful legions, its iron grip, its splendid wit, its overwhelming weight of authority. That is the situation which the Jew had to face, and the problem for him was this: How am I going to keep my law, a law based on national exclusiveness, under conditions which that law had never contemplated, and with every possibility of that local dominion, of that separate kingdom, such as the law presupposes, gone out of

the horizon of hope? It was a problem that would have staggered the very bravest, and yet it was attacked and solved by the amazing courage of the Jews. That toughness which made them so stiff-necked and stubborn in sin was turned to good account when brought over to the service of God. It justified all the pain, so to speak, which God had spent on winning over to Himself a people capable of such obstinate self-assertion. And, my brethren, the Pharisees—the Scribes and Pharisees—are the representatives and the embodiment of this tough, unyielding temper which preserved Israel's national identity through the long fierce hours in which the huge world-powers had set themselues to beat it into powder. The Pharisees were they who faced the task, who never despaired, who felt that at all costs the significance of the Divine law must be upheld, and the Jew's separation secured. Undaunted by the powers of Rome, they set against it the dominion of the Messiah; and, undismayed by the culture of Greece, they gave all their intellectual gifts to the splendours of their own holy literature. They, and those whom they represented, alone had done it; for the other sects of whom we hear had refused and abandoned the task. The Sadducee retained indeed his trust in the temple service and the high-priesthood, which he valued highly, much as we might value the establishment of the Church for its social and political importance. But, for the rest, he had come to a reasonable compromise with that which seemed to him inevitable in the situation. His intellect had yielded to the fascination of foreign literary influence, and his political judgment had resigned all practical expectation of that Messianic dominion which the prophets foretold. And the Essenes, another sect, of whom some have been disposed to make much, did not appear, as we know, on the surface even of the gospel scenery. They were devout men who went away out of sight, and lost hold on the grand hope, content to nurse their own spiritual purity, without putting faith in the historic issues;

and they had abandoned, not only hope of the Messiah, but even trust in the temple service. Both these had failed to hold fast the cues that led to Christ. The cue for Israel was in keeping the peculiar spot on which the Christ of humanity should be born. Christ was to be of the root of Jesse. That exclusiveness, that narrow separation, that solitary uniqueness of Israel, was essential to universal salvation. The Jews' identity, decreed by the law, was the necessary instrument by which God would achieve the rescue ; and everything therefore depended on its strict preservation. From that chosen, prepared spot was set apart the blood of David, the root of Jesse, the seed of Abraham ; from that spot the whole limitless hope should dawn which should fill the whole earth from sea to sea. But it must begin at that spot, it must spring from that Jewish seed. It was the Jewish Messiah born under the law to whom the nations should be gathered together, and therefore it was those who clung fast to their law, who desperately asserted the national identity, who never failed to uphold the banner of the Messiah, it was they, and they alone, who kept the way open for the Lord, and made possible His coming.

We owe this to the Pharisees, and to those of whom they were the embodiment. They had borne the brunt of the battle, the burden and the heat of the day. And the strain on them had been tremendous, and that strain had left on them its marks ; and we can see now in the light of this situation, how it was that their religious zeal took that special shape which we know so well, the meats and drinks, the washing of cups and platters, and traditions. Meats and drinks—we have seen that the strain through which they had passed must of necessity have thrown this peculiar stress on the minute details of meat and drink. Meats and drinks—they were the symbols of loyality to the covenant ; they were the pledges of patriotism. The Jew had for his task to preserve his typical identity, while he was scattered as loose powder amid the

swarming populace, in whom all distinctions were ceasing. Such a task was impossible, unless he could keep alive a continuous, unbroken, unchanging social habit, by which he felt himself cut off from the indiscriminate habit of life about him, in which he recognised his community with his race. Such a social habit was sustained in spite of all opposing pressure, so long as every meal that he ate had a typical and an exclusive character by which he was proclaimed to be the son of Abraham. There was the key of the situation. Nothing could fuse Jew and Greek—nothing could destroy the identity of Israel, so long as the Jew held fast this distinction. And so, in the very thick of these cities the Jew long persisted in this unconquerable difference; it held together fast and solid. Every time a Jew ate or drank, he must go apart, he must withdraw himself into the secret of his religion, he must feel the national story. No wonder that meats and drinks became to him the very centre and hope of his creed; no wonder they constituted the cardinal point of the battle that raged through the Acts and epistles round the name of St. Paul. It was no small matter that had given them their extraordinary importance; they had been the standard of Israel's chivalrous belief in himself.

And, again, the washing of cups and platters, the incessan purifications, we understand how attention became so rooted in these details. The law made the touch of heathen things to be pollution; it bade the Jew keep clean from touching the unclean. But now, in these latter days, the heathen was no casual accident; he was to be found everywhere, on every side, and the Jew could not go out of his house without touching him. He could not be sure that any vessel that he used had not just before been in heathen hands, given to some unclean purpose. How then was he to keep the law of God under conditions such as these? His contact with heathenism was too constant and complicated for him to be able to notice how often it occurred; and his only resource, as he thought, was to purify himself as

often as he went out or came in, and to wash everything he took up. It is easy to picture the anxieties of a scrupulous conscience, and how it had come about that it was thought safest to do what St. Mark describes, to be always washing in fear of unknown contamination, so that "when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables." "Look at those Pharisees," said the worldly, scoffing Sadducee, "look at them"—as he saw them rubbing clean the great golden candlestick of the temple—"they would wash the sun itself if they could get at it!"

And those traditions, how inevitably these had grown! The Jew stood face to face with a situation which his law had not contemplated. The law was given under one set of circumstances, and had to be kept under another. How was it to be done? "Never mind," said the easy-going Sadducees; "do not worry; if precepts cannot be kept, they cannot, and there's an end of it." A man of conscience was not to be so put off. "There was the law; it was given to the Jew to be kept, and if circumstances made some of it impossible, how could it be adapted to circumstances? How much was irrevocable and essential? how much might lawfully lapse?" That was the perpetual demand of the true Jew-conscience. And this demand involved a scientific answer, the answer of those who could study and examine and sift and interpret, and apply the law to the endless diversity of cases which the new life supplied. The demand necessitated the existence of a learned body of interpreters, and this all the more when we recall that the people had ceased to speak the original tongue in which the law had been given. It had to be translated in order for them to understand it, so elaborate was the difficulty. It was the duty, then, of the learned and the commentator to interpret; and this learned class was called upon not only to interpret, but also to develop a system of moral casuistry. Life was pro-

ducing case after case in which a Jew was forced into perplexity as to how he was to keep his law. He turned to these rabbis for answer. "What am I to do in such and such a situation?" For instance, his intricate commercial relations, how was he to enter into these without breaking the law about debts, about jubilee years? And this large free life of great Gentile cities, in what difficulties did it involve him? The Sabbath day, what might he do in it? The Sabbath day's journey, how long might it last, how short might it be? How could he keep the law, his law, and yet not reduce himself to absolute impotence in competition with unshackled heathenism? We see at once what would happen; how absorbing the interest in such questions would become, how important would the rabbis be who could successfully handle such practical perplexities; and how one rabbi would permit much, would "loosen," they said, and how another would be rigid, would "bind"; and we can see how very easily out of their real necessities there would grow up a vast horde of traditions, of schools, of parties, debates and quarrels, so that the service of God and the obedience of the law would become a complicated science, full of technical casuistry, which only the trained experts could master, and from which the poor and ignorant were inevitably shut out, so that the Jewish saying went abroad, "The people who know not the law is accursed."

And we can understand how such a system might outgrow and overshadow the law, how, in the excitement of discovering what this rabbi had said, and what that, they might lose sight of what God Himself had said; we can see how it would become true that they had "made the law of God of none effect through their traditions"; how, immersed in minute problems as to how some tithe might be paid, what neglected, and what not, talking about "mint, and anise, and cummin," they had let slip the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.

We have not time to consider that—their sin on which the

terrible woes fell—to-day: let it be enough to have considered how their particular sin came about, and what was the situation with which they had to deal. And one brief word we need for ourselves. This especial sphere the story of the Pharisee brings home to each one of us, whatever his soul's sin—this one thing he did, and did most bravely: he retained, he secured, he transmitted that deposited hope of redemption which had been entrusted by God to Israel's keeping. He kept the channels clear and free down which the grace of God could arrive at future generations. Without his supreme effort that message had been dissipated into thin air, a river of hope would have been choked in the waste of sand; but the Pharisee kept the road open. Through his struggle to hold fast the national identity of Israel, the way of the Messiah was cast up and prepared; and we are to-day living in Christ through his tough and unconquerable persistence. Well, if that be so, in passing our vigorous condemnation on his sin, let us ask ourselves, have we any touch of his heroic virtues? for we too are here on earth, not merely to find God for ourselves, but to secure our heritage of truth for those who are yet unborn. We too have our task set, to transmit to our children the deposit of redemption. Do we, any one of us, take account of that most serious responsibility? Those of us—alas! so many—who faintly hold on to a shadowy faith by force of habit, by some dim tradition, and are easily content and satisfied if it will just carry us through, just save us from falling out of the ranks of those who believe, just last our time, do we at all recollect how deplorably we are falling behind our duty to our race, and our calling from God? Only through us can God transmit His good news; only through us can our children receive their inheritance. What, then, have we to hand down? For what can they look from us? Do we suppose that this vague, ghostly hope which we feebly nurse along from day to day will bear transmission, will survive our own collapse? It only exists in us as an echo of the past, as a reflex action

inherited from a believing ancestry, a stray reverberation of old and dying voices. Such a faith has no toughness and no vigour to stand the shock of our heresy. It will go out like a flickering flame on a windy night. Does not the question press most miserably as soon as our own children begin to press for the food of faith from our hands? What have we to tell them? That faint, timid hope of ours, how can we express it or convey it? It will not bear to be put into words, still less into words that a child can take and use for himself. How miserable to be voiceless, to be helpless—a father of the flesh transmitting life, but no father after the Spirit, transmitting the gospel that will make life worth having!

Is not this just the misery of our day? And do not suppose that I am scoffing at that timid hope so faintly cherished—God forbid!—for we are in the service of Him who would never break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. No, nurse it, cherish it, if that is all that you can do; only remember, so long as that is all, you must be very humble. You are far below the level at which you can afford to scorn the Pharisee. You are failing in that task set you by God which he at least achieved—that task far harder than the mere work of finding one's own redemption, the task of transmitting the full, entire body of truth, so that nothing be lost of what God has done on man's behalf. That he achieved in face of a unique situation, and against tremendous odds; and by his achievement we receive the deposit. And this our generation—which of all others, perhaps, has had most hard words for the Pharisee—may well stop now and again, and ask itself: "What faith in Christ am I going to transmit to those that are now being born? God help me to arrive at a measure of truth, solid and real and lasting, that I may leave behind me when I am gone!"

PHARISAISM.[1]

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican."—ST. LUKE xviii. 10.

THE Pharisee, as we have seen, was, in his day, the representative of the covenanted people. That is what made his case so serious—that he was the religious core of the race, its official organ. He was the spiritual eye with which Israel was to see its Messiah. In him Israel was to be tested as a people. According to his success or failure would it be determined whether the Son of man, in coming to His own, should be recognised and received by His own or no. That is the tragedy of the gospel story. That is why our Lord's disappointment at the Pharisees is so anxious and so bitter. They are His point of contact with the people as a whole, just because they were the guardians and preservers of that prophetic tradition which clung to the reality of Israel's unique mission, and to the hope of a Messianic rescue. The Scribes and Pharisees did sit in Moses' seat: our Lord does not dispute this. They were the living exponents of loyalty to the Mosaic Law. So entirely did He acknowledge this, that we know He adopted much of their method and habit. He presented Himself to the people in the character of a rabbi, and that was His favourite name among His friends—the name by which Judas would salute Him when he would come before Him as an intimate friend: "Master, Master; and kissed Him"; the name by which the Magdalen saluted Him on the resurrection morning: "Rabboni!" And He moved about with His

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 8th, being the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity, 1889.

band of pupils, of disciples, His children, the circle who sat at His feet, as Paul at Gamaliel's, and who should so become good Scribes, instructed in bringing out of their treasures "things new and old." He prepared them to bind and to loose, to give authentic ethical judgments, to direct the discipline of the Law; and He loved the parable, the analogy, the enigmatic metaphor, the story, so characteristic of rabbinical teaching. And He was to be found in the synagogue, which was the typical expression of the development that had been made necessary in the teaching by the conditions of the return, and He took His normal place there as interpreter of Scripture. And, again, He adopted their classification of the devout life—prayer, almsgiving, fasting. And, more than all, He made His own, and sanctioned that peculiar body of doctrine which it was the work of a Pharisee to assert in his schools, that fresh teaching, which they had developed since the closing of the canon, as to angels and spirits, as to the judgment to come, as to the resurrection of the dead. This all became the very heart of our gospel; and our Lord unhesitatingly declared the Pharisee right in this, and the Sadducee wholly wrong, and therefore it is that St. Paul is perfectly honest when he proclaims himself, in the midst of the hostile Jewish assembly, to be "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." It is no mere catch-phrase, used to divide his foes: it is perfectly true. He is but obeying his genuine Pharisaic leading, when he believes in the resurrection from the dead. It is the old creed, learned under Gamaliel, which he claims is verified in the rising from the dead. It is because he is so much of a Pharisee that he is arraigned at the bar: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee. It is concerning the hope of the resurrection that I am called in question."

The Pharisee was the heir of the covenant. And the publican, what of him? In all this he had utterly and miserably failed. So far as he went, as his influence acted, God's covenant would

have lapsed, the chosen people would have been blended and fused and lost in the vague host of hopeless Gentiles, the prophetic hope of the Messiah would have died away into forlorn forgetfulness. For him the prophets had spoken in vain. The heritage, the deposit, this had slipped out of his grasp. He cherished nothing as a trust on the world's behalf. He had compromised, he had betrayed the cause. He had even paraded his disloyalty, for he wore the livery of the conquering Roman. He made his own private gain out of his country's shame; he farmed for himself the very revenues which were the signal of his failure, so contemptible, so mercenary was his treachery. And our Lord never disguised His condemnation of the publican's career; He classes it with harlotry, and never disputes the classification. And how then can we even picture the indignation and scorn of the Pharisee at such a renegade, as he caught sight of him praying in the very temple which he so dishonoured? We, perhaps, know how a clergyman, who is a fervent total abstainer, burning with a sense of the fatality of drink, feels towards the owner of the reeking gin-palace which spreads its ruin through his parish. Can he believe in any moral goodness being at work in the man who profits by so foul a trade? Or can we think how difficult it is for a Nationalist in Ireland to give any credit at all to the motives of a man who seems to him to betray his own people in their misfortunes by land-grabbing? And the Pharisee must have seemed to himself to be justified in adding, to all such scorn as this, the righteous condemnation of God's judgment on a treacherous Israelite who had broken his word to the Mosaic charge. So we can imagine a little, perhaps, the horror and the contempt—"Thank God, I am not like that, not an extortioner, not an adulterer, no, and, thank God, not like that publican there." So the Pharisee stood praying in the house of his God, that house to whose honour he deemed himself so faithful. So after his prayer he passed down to his house. We can see him with the complacent assurance depicted in his

face, in his gait, in the very folds of his garments, with their broad fringes. How clear he feels and looks, how absolutely convinced of his own rightness, how tough and square and strong, he moves along there among the unclean Gentiles, holding aloof, lifting his skirts! He has the look of a man who has a position to dignify, an altitude to sustain. Wherever he went, he would be offered the chief seat; and he knows it, and he looks it. And he wears the look of a scientific expert, too, who knows so much more than others of the true mind of God. He has the entry there, he has unlocked the secrets, he is in possession. The crowd who do not know the rules and traditions, they must be accursed. They are daily defiling themselves in the Gentile crowd through their ignorance or through negligence; and he knows exactly what ought to be done, and what not, and he can account for everything he does, can give you chapter and verse, and a definite opinion to justify himself from a well-known authority. In eye, in face, in gesture, we read the confident complacency of the self-occupied, self-approving man who could so easily put the whole world straight, if only it would let him, the man who never loses the consciousness of the "Thank God, I am not as other men are"—goes down to his house, sketched, as we know, for us with such brilliant irony by one who knew him well, sketched there as the man who in every notion and motion boasteth that he is a Jew, and rests upon the Law, and glories in God, and knows the Divine will, and can precisely discern the things that are excellent, instructed as he is out of his Law, and is quite confident that he is meant to be a guide to the blind, a light for them that sit in darkness, the corrector of the foolish, a teacher of those who are to him as mere babes, having in his Law, as he is convinced, the reality of all knowledge and all truth.

So he looks to us as we watch him home. Something is wrong—what is it? We can learn well enough, for we can go behind the hard outward shell of the man; we can see in the

secret places of his heart, for one who once was even as he has told us, has revealed to us what is behind the screen. Something was at work, he tells us, or ought to have been, which terribly belied the confident, the self-sufficient exterior. What was it? What does this Pharisee, who has unbosomed himself to us, tell of it? What did he find? Did he find that the Law, to which he had adhered at such hazard, flattered him always into that self-assurance? Did it breed in him that smooth, self-reliant approval? Was there not another voice with which it spake, low, low down, within the inner man, a voice of reproof, of conviction? This law, up to which he pressed, as into the embrace of God, had in it the sharpness of a sword dividing joints and marrow. True, it was in itself just and good and holy; true that in the inward will he, the man, the Pharisee, could himself delight in it, and approve it, and welcome it, and find it a joy: but then the very will that so rejoiced had in it a strange, uncomfortable impotence. The will rejoiced indeed, but the man, the man could not do what he willed—nay, the man did that which he willed not, that which he abhorred. The will was there to do, approving the Law, and responding to the Law; but the man himself, he was a prisoner in other hands, swept away by that which he would not, a slave to the carnal desire which he and the Law condemned. That was what happened, and the nearer he pressed to the Law the more obvious and the more painful became this dualism. St. Paul, who tells us all this, may possibly be using the full light of the gospel to read out what had gone on in him as a Pharisee; he may be giving it a clearer outline, a more emphatic significance than would have been possible to him in the old days before he believed: but the struggle still was there in him, the split had showed itself within; the Law itself, he found, had a side on which, far from being as honey in the mouth, it had this bitter taste of accusation. All this was there in him then—a suspense, a dread, an alarm. The divorce of the man from himself was

ever becoming more and more unmistakable, the sense of impotence was ever growing more and more horrible, the sword of the word was there, piercing and dividing asunder joint and marrow. So Paul the Pharisee tells us that is what was going on within him. But if that dark secret was astir or suspected there in the innermost recesses of the man, what of that outward Pharisaic complacency, that smooth self-assurance? There can be but one explanation. The Pharisee was stifling that conscience within him, was silencing the voice of the Law in his heart. It was there, that sense of dislocation—so St. Paul assures us. So far as a man was loyal to the Law the rupture became more evident. It was the immediate result of the Law itself, it was through the Law that he became conscious of it. The Law worked within him the knowledge of sin, for he heard there that unspoken whisper: "Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that sayest a man shall not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou who gloriest in the Law, through thy transgressions dishonourest thou God?" That was the eternal penetrating whisper which he, the Pharisee of Pharisees, carried about within him; and others must have known the whisper even as he. All who were true to themselves knew it, and yet their public life seemed wholly to belie it, to conceal it. And those who knew it not, who felt so self-sufficient, they must have been false either to themselves or to the Law. They must have kept it under, they smothered it, they hushed up its hidden cry. They must have deceived themselves in deeming themselves loyal; otherwise if they had but been honest, there would have been in their faces, in their eyes, not that hard, unpitying self-assurance, but a scared look of fear, a humiliating anxiety, the sense of a miserable disclosure of weakness, the look of a wounded animal, plaintive, sympathetic, appealing, the anguish of a secret voice that was ever breaking out of its repressed silence into the "O wretched man that I am! who

shall deliver me?" This there must have been, and in hushing this all up, in choking this self-revelation, they were what our Lord called them, hypocrites, self-deceivers.

Hypocrites—and how serious the sin! For it is self-deceit within the spiritual mind itself; it was in the very motions with which they sought and served God that their hypocrisy lay: not in the lower man, but in the very highest; falsehood secreted within the very heart of the innermost intention with which they gave themselves up to the Divine Law. They deceived themselves into thinking they were loyal to God just in that very point in which they were disloyal to His teaching. They paraded before His eyes as a merit their devotion to the Law that ought to have convicted them of sin. They brought Him as their offering that complacent security of theirs, as being on His side, which demanded from them a penitential confession. And such a sin has a peculiar terror about it that it is, if left alone, past cure: for cure must depend on the power to recognise the need of cure; and this recognition can only come from a conscience that stands above the sin and condemns it by a higher standard. But what, then, if that higher standard be itself just that which has got awry? What if it be the conscience itself which is disturbed? There is no criterion left by which to test and to detect the wrong. We reach the truth of Plato's old paradox that it is worse to do wrong without knowing it than knowing it. In the deepest sense that must be true. So long as the wrong is known to be wrong the man's moral insight is unperverted, his judgment is sane, sound, and uncorrupt; and at every moment his recovery may be open to him, for he has still the spiritual eye to see that the Law is just and good and holy, even though he be led captive by a carnal sloth. But the man who does wrong, thinking it to be right, gives evidence of a far more radical evil. He shows that the spiritual eye is blind, and our Lord has warned us how great is that darkness. His moral judgment is itself in a diseased condition, his innermost heart

is corrupt, he has no inner self now that he can disentangle from the guilt, and say, "It is not I that sin, but sin that sinneth in me," and therefore, left to himself, he is shut off from the possibilities of repentance, for there is no standard within him to which any preacher can make appeal. The open sinner, the publican, the man who surrenders himself to a low and degraded life, is spared this deeper moral peril. He does not use his conscience, and therefore he is saved from the danger of abusing it. He knows that he is wrong; he does not mistake wrong for right. The publican and the harlot despised themselves for what they did as much as the Pharisees did; they did not commit the blunder at least of defending the immorality of their lives. Their inner thoughts, now so weak and slothful, may yet at any moment be aroused, be considered, be obeyed: the way of recovery is open. But the Pharisee—what can be done for him? The inner voice was already obeyed, only it gave no true and honest utterance. It was this inner voice itself which was at fault; it ought to be sending up the cry, "O wretched man that I am!" and instead it is ever repeating, "Thank God I am not as other men are."

No wonder that our Lord was profoundly sensitive to the perils of such a position, no wonder that ever and again He thundered out loud tones of warning, of rebuke, and alarm. Other sins were simple to deal with, but here was a moral condition which called out all His resources. He spent Himself therefore, He risked His life, in efforts to pluck the veil away from those blind eyes, to shake them into some suspicion of their sin. And surely not in vain; for in the Acts we read how many of those same Pharisees upon whom He poured out His denunciations did become obedient, did learn to join the company of publicans and harlots who had gone in before them. Still, though they personally found their entry, they had failed, as representatives of the people, to recognise the Messiah, who had come to His own; they, the true heirs,

were the last to perceive Him : and Jerusalem had therefore, through their failure, never known the day of visitation, and the house of which those Pharisees were the official guardians was left unto them desolate. They could not see Him, and we know why—just because of their own particular and peculiar sin. They saw no need for their own deliverance from any captivity. If only they had been listening to that voice which St. Paul knew so well, that anguish which was ready ever to break out in the cry, "Who shall deliver me?" then they would have known the Messiah, their sense of need would have given them eyes to see and ears to hear. So our Lord told them, when they asked by what authority He did these things ; we know how He challenged them with the baptism of John. The baptism of John, we know that embodied a confession of impotent repentance—repentance that confessed and was washed in Jordan, and yet a repentance that found no adequateness in its own confession, a repentance that still therefore in its abasement confessed its own failure to remove sin, and looked out for another, for Him who should come with the true, the availing baptism, the baptism of fire, for One who should indeed be to them as that Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world. Why did the Pharisee not understand the message of the Baptist? Was it only for the sinners, and not for the earnest and devout? Yet those who came nearest to the Law and closest to God ought to have known more and not less of the activity of sin, for it was the Law which gave them the knowledge of sin. Why did they not receive that very knowledge through their devotion to the Law? The baptism of John, that was the primary question which determined by what authority Jesus stood purging His own temple ; the baptism of John, that was the test which proved the self-deceit of the Pharisee. The publicans and harlots, they, at least, had known what the Baptist meant, and so knowing, they saw the Lamb of God which would take away their sin. They, the blind, saw : the Pharisees who saw

were proved blind. "I am come, that they who see not may see, and they who see may become blind."

My brethren, we too are Pharisees: we fall under the "woe" of the Pharisees, whenever our advance, if such it be, in religious life ceases to increase and intensify our sense of penitence. It is the same now as with them in this matter. If we are loyal to the service of God, if we are indeed committed to the way of Christ, this must always mean that we see deeper and deeper into the dread mystery of our own sin, and are filled with an ever profounder shame at the sight that there we see. This must be so by the very law of holiness, for holiness in man is simply the natural outcome of the forces of grace within us; it means that the powers thrown into our being by God's creative and recreative breath issue from us in their normal shape, put out their proper motions, find unhindered freedom of action; so that even if man's holiness were perfect, then he could no more think of praising himself for it, or flattering himself on it, than he could do so for taking his breath in the right way. He would joyfully recognise in himself the free passage of God's outpourings, and would give thanks that he was so fearfully and so wonderfully made. That, if his holiness were perfect: but what irony in the very supposition! What we presume to call our holiness is but the broken shadow of bliss which might have been; it is but the slow, painful, fragmentary, disappointing recovery of some faint suggestion of all that God would have done in and with us if we had not hindered and denied Him. Such broken gleams of goodness as appear in us do but serve to open our eyes to the vision of what we have lost. We had not even dreamed of the close fatherhood of God, and of what He was longing to pour out upon us; and now, by some feeble effort of obedience, we just begin to understand it. The darkness just lifts a little; we gain at last some slight estimate of the burden, the weary weight of sin, with which we have hitherto held down the mercy of God, and forbidden it to save us.

Oh! if He responds so graciously to our pitiful and tardy efforts, what would He not have done if we could have given Him a whole heart and a sound service! What promises were waiting, what pledges, what yearning! Honey out of the stony rock and wheat flour, with that He would have satisfied us, and the uttermost parts of the heathen for our possession, if only we had hearkened. Without some touch of holiness, we cannot even guess at all that has been held back; we must have drunk some drop of His cup, even to know its sweetness. Our sins we never can sufficiently know, and therefore never sufficiently sorrow. And especially our advances in sanctity are just enough to reveal the fulness with which Christ is all in all to those who know. So the tears, the shame, the humiliation with which we recognise all that the bad years have now made impossible. Too late, too late, we learn, to do more now than offer to Jesus the broken fragment of wasted hours which He is patient enough to gather in, that contrite and broken heart which even now He will not despise. Something He will yet, of His pity, do with us. But, ah! how poor, how profitless the fruit for God of lives that have yielded themselves so tardily, and have brought Him nothing but the wreckage, the waifs and the strays of all the wealth with which it has been endowed!

Such is bound to be the temper of all who serve Christ with any loyalty at all; and for them self-satisfaction, self-applause, self-complacency becomes the one absolute impossibility. And praise from other men for their goodness would be to such a sharp and poignant distress, against which they would protest with real agony. Pharisaism is impossible to us if we are honest to Christ. The two are so utterly incompatible. As we have seen, they cannot co-exist. Honesty to Christ must kill out the pharisaic temper; and, therefore, dear brethren, in our management of our souls, as we are led by God's grace to give more care and pains to ourselves, let us be quickly suspicious of anything that seems to us like a spiritual advance,

if we do not find it tends also to deepen our spirit of penitence. Not that the religious life will be joyless or morose; nay, but the thrilling joys that break out upon us—as the strong force of God, the blessed Father, is felt once again stirring and pressing and alive within us—will themselves be to us the manifestation of all that we have done and still are doing to disappoint so gracious a Father and to degrade so wonderful a love.

THE TREASURE IN THE FIELD.[1]

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field."—ST. MATT. xiii. 44.

THE purpose of a parable, as we saw last Sunday, is at once to attract and to provoke. It has to entice by its easy charm, by its frank simplicity, by the breadth and humanity of its appeal; but always it has to sustain an inner note of warning that shall be heard sounding throughout the surface-story crying, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." "He that hath ears!" There is something more than appears on the surface; there is something that needs attention to perceive it—something of special, unparaded interest. Give it your mind, be not idle, keep your wits on the stretch; for you must have ears if you would hear it.

Let us take one instance of the way in which these parables of the kingdom fulfil this intention. At first we understand. They are so direct, so easy; could any one fail to understand imagery so plain, so universal, so sympathetic? The use of the commonest matters of daily labour and life seems to discard the possibility of mystery or of difficulty. It must be a simple and common truth, surely, that is conveyed in such simple and common analogies! So we lightly fancy, and so fancying, we go on listening. But then, in listening, does it not strike us that the very simplicity of the images used to

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 13, being the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1891.

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portray this kingdom of heaven is itself a source of perplexity? The images are simple enough, but they are so unlike one another. How can they all apply to the same thing? What a strange affair this kingdom of heaven must be if it is at once like a sower sowing, and like mustard-seed growing, and like leaven hidden in a lump of meal, and like nets cast into the sea, and like treasure hid in a field, and like a rare and beautiful pearl; or, again, like a marriage-feast which a king makes for his son; or a man travelling into a far country, and committing his money to his servants or his vineyard to his labourers; or like ten virgins, with their lamps, waiting for the lingering bridegroom! How is all to be put together? how is to be brought into one distinct and significant impression? And yet, to our Lord, evidently the meaning that He would convey by all this variety of symbols is quite precise, and regular, and clear. It is a kingdom that He pictures, not a vague, formless idea floating about life that might take many forms, entering into ever new combinations, transforming itself into novel fashions. No, not an idea, that kingdom of His; but a real condition of existence: something uniform, organic, regulated, intelligible—a kingdom; something that has consistency, and government, and solidity, and coherence; something that works on fixed principles, and hangs together, and testifies to an undivided administration, to a concentrated sway. A kingdom—that is what stands before the eyes of the Lord as He speaks in these parables of the kingdom—with steady outlines, and firm frontiers, and ordered territories, coming down from heaven, and entering into this earth, and taking its place amid the substantial solidities of human existence. There it is to be seen plainly, like a city on a hill. It has all the administrative mechanism of a royal household, of a royal domain. Then, if so, how can it be so lissom and mobile as a dream? It is only shifting and vaporous clouds without substance, without identity, that can change with every changing breath of air, and can look at one moment

like a whale, and at another like a camel. How can a kingdom, which is the very type of settled consistency, of unvarying permanence, shift and change so that the mental eye cannot fix its ever-vanishing shape as it appears, now like a seed, now like a sower, and now like a treasure?

Now there is a question that contains the secret provocation of the parables; there is one way at least, in which they force those who are in earnest in what they feel to go behind, to look deeper, to demand interpretations; and, my brethren, we know that to those who so press in, there can be but one solution of that particular difficulty on which we have dwelt. The solution lies in the personality of Jesus Christ. He it is who is Himself the spring and source of all that constitutes the kingdom: and the kingdom that He has come to found and to fashion is to be a kingdom of living personalities leading up into His living person. Only so—as a kingdom, of which both the source as well as the material are all personal throughout—can it be at once so pliable and yet so self-identical, so mobile and yet so positive; for all personality displays and retains its consistent identity through all the variety of its actions. That is what we mean by it—the retention of identity in difference. And so this personality of Jesus gathers up into its own enduring identity all the varied and manifold and scattered actions by which it is manifested. However diverse they may be, however unexpected, through them all there issues a single will, a single character—Jesus Christ; and thus in Him they are built together into a single and coherent whole—they form a kingdom, the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven, then, in all its plastic freedom, is always one thing—the manifestation of the person of Jesus Christ on earth. And now, remembering that we are dealing with just one aspect of this unchanging kingdom, let us turn to the symbol selected in my text to-day—"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hid in a field." Here is one way in which the manifestation of Jesus Christ will offer itself to

men. It will not always—so we learn—force itself upon our notice; it will not always be writ large in front of men's eyes; it will not come with a shout, placarded abroad; it will not present itself as the steady goal of all effort, as the prize for which we strive and strain. That is what we might well expect it to be; that is what indeed, it often is, but not always. No, quite the contrary. Sometimes it will lie back unobserved and unsuspected, like treasure in a field. There it will lie, in a field, in some common everyday place, a place which suggests no wonderful find, which excites no curiosity, and prompts no effort—a field, an ordinary field. Across it men come and dig, and cattle graze there, and birds alight and fly off again, and bees go booming past it, and grass grows silently there, and flowers spring, and bud, and fade, and the rain falls, and the dew, and the sun goes across the homely surface, and the moon looks down, and seed time and harvest, they follow one another there. So it all goes on. It is nothing but a field, like any other field. It calls out no peculiar interest; no man as he passes stops and wonders what it is that field contains, or has an instinctive thrill that he must look again; no one sets to work to dig there in search of a secret; no sign is given, no voice arrests. A mere field; it sleeps there in silence, unheeded, unremarked, unsuspected, until one day, just by chance we say, by accident, without meaning it, without foreseeing it, some man in the middle of his labour in the field, stumbles upon a treasure hid there, a treasure that neither he nor any one else had ever heard of. It was the last place in the world in which to look for it. If he covered it up quickly and went away to buy the field, not a soul would dream what he was after; and yet it was the treasure, the treasure worth all that the man ever possessed, a treasure worth his winning now at any price. "He went away, and for his joy therein he sold all that he had, and bought that field."

That, brethren, is the way in which, as our Lord tells us, it will often happen that His kingdom will be found by us. It

sounds unlikely when first we hear it, unlikely for a revelation of God to proceed in that fashion ; and yet how well we know it, how perfectly it describes a man's frequent experience ! Human life—how little on its surface, as we survey it with ordinary unilluminated eyes, how little it suggests the deep secret that it holds in reserve, how little it looks as if it held within it a manifestation of Jesus, of the kingdom of heaven ! "A common field," we should pronounce it—that and nothing more. Take the great earth itself, with its woods and fields. We glance over it, and it seems so solid and complete, it accounts for itself so completely. It has its habitual ways and laws and rules; they have always continued as they are; we can make our accustomed calculations about them. We can count on their steadfastness. We can be sure of it ; we cannot know how and why, of course ; but that does not the least interfere with our practical experience of earth's sameness, of its commonplace. Our early child-wonder very soon drops away, and we get to take all the sum of daily things as they come, and as they are. Just now, for instance, we are all discussing the harvest and its prospects, and we read the careful analysis of the results by the correspondent of the *Times ;* all is duly tabulated, noted, explained. The rainfall, the lingering spring, the heat—it accounts for all this ; the barometrical record is made and interpreted for us. Everything is plain ; everything is there. We talk it over ; we confirm it in talks with our friends ; we sum it up—so much for 1891, and in 1892 we shall repeat the process. All is such plain matter of fact, all falls well within the ordinary horizons of sensible business men, and it is all true. The earth does lie there quietly to our handling ; she submits to our inspection, to our criticism, to our analysis; she spreads herself out there, dumb and unprotesting, while we pass our hands over her and feel her, and examine her, and pronounce judgment upon her and distribute her resources. How little does she suggest of the secret that is within her, how little does she insist that she holds a treasure hidden !

A field; a field of human labour—that is all; a field on the face of which generations of men work out their little lives, and perish and are buried; and yet there, within it all, right in the very heart of it, is God; there is Jesus Christ, the living word and will of God, by whom the whole earth was made, by whom it holds together at this and every hour, without whose secret vitality all this fabric would dissolve, melt, resolve itself into gloom. There He lives and works and moves unsuspected, unrecorded, as a treasure hid in a field.

Or, again, the world of men and women. As we watch them how little do they suggest the secret ministry within! The hurrying crowd, as it passes by in the street, or there at its work within the shops—what a commonplace business does it all represent! We can guess well enough at all the interests and motives and aims which these people embody—we know them all; they are thoroughly on our level, habitual, intelligible, and ordinary. Their faces tell the tale plainly enough; they reveal the sort of affairs with which they are concerned, the hopes, and fears, and joys, and passions and anxieties. There is nothing mysterious here. If we stop one of them as he passes, if we meet a friend and begin to talk, we know exactly the topic that will be uppermost. We should ask him after his health, how they were at home, what sort of holiday he had had, or speak of something in the paper, or of the Naval Exhibition, or the splendid weather, and shake hands and say "good-bye." Not a word about any deeper subject, no reference dropped that travelled at all outside the traditional limits of the common, every-day world. I am not suggesting that there is anything wrong in that—we cannot force spiritual interests into every casual conversation. Only how hard it is, amid the multiplicity of these encounters, to sustain one's faith against the pressure of the commonplace; how hard to recall oneself and say, "Every one of those multitudes has, I know, a living soul, all baptized Christians; and within each soul dwells the Spirit of the living Jesus, in whom they

live and have their being: He is there, the sacred, unutterable treasure, buried within this common-place, well-worn field"!

Or again, there is another field which is too apt to conceal the treasure to which it is peculiarly dedicated—the Church within which the living God abides, the Church which is His body, His spouse. This Church often wears an outward air and garb, which is the very last that would imply that where her treasure is there her heart lies also. What a common-place, worldly concern she too looks! How obvious, how usual, how comprehensible, how human the motives, the interests that are busy within her! how little in her there seems of the virgin dutifully trimming her lamp through the night, listening for the voice of a bridegroom who delays so long! No, nothing catches our eye in her that is luminous or suggestive or provocative. All is dull and dusty. She has embedded herself in so much that smacks of earth. Even those of us who are deeply interested in her welfare, find ourselves discussing her fortunes, her finances, her influence, in much the same tone and temper as we should use about any other institution; and her clergy have most obviously the failings and the weaknesses and the faults of other men, and talk over their ways, their successes, their chances of promotion. How poor, how base, the level to which we drop! Who would imagine we were speaking of the work of the Holy Ghost, who administers and distributes the gifts and capacities, even the body of Jesus Christ. This is not all right; this is not all being condoned by the parables; this hideous worldliness of the Church cannot be justified. No, but yet not all of this earthly appearance of the Church is wrong, because sins of ours have intermingled with it. For it was intended, even without any sin of worldliness, but just because it was the body of Christ made out of the dust of the earth, just because it was the body of Him who is Himself without form or comeliness that we should desire Him. So it was intended that it should be possible for the Church of the living God to appear to the

outward unilluminated eye as a mere ordinary field, like any other field. It would be possible, so our Lord warned us, for those outside not to dream of the treasure hidden within; it would be possible for men to pass it by, and cross over it in heedless indifference, without an inkling of what they would find there if they dug. Yes, it would be true, and rightly true, that the kingdom of heaven, the Church of Christ, might appear as a blind field, in which a treasure lay buried, unannounced—a treasure hid in a field, and yet a treasure which a man finds.

He finds it. One day it happens—happens so strangely, so suddenly, by the oddest of accidents. Right in the middle of some common work, without our forethought, perhaps without even our prayers, we stumble upon the truth—we find the treasure. There it lies in the field that showed no sign of it, and where it had lain all the time. The field—the field of the earth—perhaps one day at some solemn sunset, or at some hour of kindling emotion, or perhaps under the excitement of some violent accident or providential escape, it all flashes in upon us; the earth, even the hard shell of the physical earth, seems to become alive; it breathes like a living thing. There are pulsations that pass; there is a voice that is heard, without language, without sound; the powers are caught at play, the powers that are ever labouring within this material screen, the powers that weave the web of the garment of God. Suddenly we know it, we are in the presence of a living will. There is a Person who rides on the whirlwind, and directs the storm, and makes the winds His angels. We are before Him! how dreadful is this place! this poor, naked field of which we thought so little as we used it—how dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. So sometimes we stumble on it.

Or the field of human nature—do we not there suddenly find ourselves brought up short by most unlooked-for discoveries? Under the strain of some sudden blow, some terrible tempta-

tion, some heart-breaking loss, the veil that hangs over a man's heart is abruptly torn aside, and we are admitted within the shrine of his soul; and, lo! within this man or woman whom we thought so commonplace, so like other people, so superficial—or perhaps one who seemed to us so much in the world, so amusing, so full of high spirits—we see what startles us; a spiritual tragedy has been going on all the time, or an heroic struggle—some passionate hope; it has been going on, and now we suddenly recognise it in the secret recesses of the soul; all the deepest forces of this personal life suddenly come to the surface and declare themselves, and we learn what a vital reality religion has been to this man who hid it so deep from us. We learn how he has striven against some sin, or what a sacrifice he has made in the cause of love or of duty—he who looked to us so easy-going and so careless; we are ashamed to find how profoundly we have misjudged him. We begin to suspect how many and how rich are the treasures that lie close to us, hidden within the social conventions of common life.

And the Church, that other field—do we know what it is to have discovered the real powers of the Church of England? That Church we had for so long taken to be merely an excellent institution, a customary affair of popular life that seemed to suit our English habits and temper, a State church necessary to sustain the general credit of religion, a wholesome bulwark (we thought it) of social morality, a pleasant and gentlemanly method of satisfying our spiritual conscience—that Church at some moment or other appears to open and let us through, and we pass in at some door, and we look up, and lo! there a strange thing lies before us; there is the holy place, the treasure for which our hearts had hungered. We look, we go near, we handle, we taste; surely it is the living Lord, it is Jesus that was dead, and behold! He is alive again for evermore, the beginning and the end, who holds in His hands the keys of heaven and of hell—Jesus Christ our Master and Brother, our King, come down in the might of the Father

through the mystery of the Spirit, to be the forgiveness of our sin, the food of our souls, by whose touch we can be healed, of whose body and blood we may eat and not die.

Ah, my brethren, if any such discovery, whether in nature or in man or in the Church, has been vouchsafed to us, we have but one plain duty before us. The man in the parable who stumbled on the treasure made up his mind at once. Straight off he went, there and then, "and for the joy thereof, he sold all that he had," to get hold of that field and its treasure. We must act with the same ready decision. It must be action which is taken, action of some kind that pledges us to the truth of what has been disclosed; for, when once we have seen and known, then we may never go back to our former levels on which we once so lightly lingered; we may never again let nature sink back to its old mechanical godlessness; we may not forget the revelation as of light, that the men and the women about us have souls and may be friends of Jesus; we may not fall back from the apocalyptic vision of the living Christ moving amid the seven golden candlesticks, and be once more satisfied to regard the Church of England as an established institution, dependent for its existence on worldly resources and social influence. No, all that is gone for us now; it has become the forbidden thing, and therefore we must take some step, present and decisive, by which we may keep hold of the treasure that has been uncovered; something we must do that will bind us to go on, believing in what we have seen, to go on when the light fades and the moment passes, and all hopes have gone, and life looks dark and dull, and men seem again common and conventional, and the glory has vanished from the Church and left her weak and sordid and poor; for our treasure is hid in earthen vessels, hid in a field, and we must be prepared, now and again, to find that the earthen vessel or the field is all that we can see of it. Be sure of it, such times will come back over and over again, when once more we shall see nothing; and therefore be ready for

those times beforehand; act on your belief as it is when it is strongest and most clear-sighted; commit yourselves to what you felt on that good day when you found the treasure. Your one duty now is to hold fast that faith and to be loyal to that standard. Remember the joy with which you first found it. That joy, was it not a joy beyond all those you have ever known?—the joy of realizing that every barrier had fallen away, that all veils had been withdrawn, that heaven and earth had opened out, and that you and Jesus stood at last face to face with one another and nothing between. That joy is so deep that even when it be under the shadow of some awful danger it may yet surpass all the sorrow by which it has been gained, may overwhelm all the pain—such joy, at any cost, to know God and Jesus Christ, whom He has sent!

In the name then of Him who, for the joy set before Him, endured the cross and despised the shame, follow hard after the steps of Him who for the joy left all that He had, that He might go and win the field. Buy that field, fasten on the treasure, cling to it; never let go what once, in that moment of vision, has suddenly surprised you; for indeed that treasure is above rubies, it cannot be gotten for gold, neither can silver be paid or measured for the price thereof: for indeed it is the kingdom of heaven, it is Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE PEARL OF GREAT PRICE.[1]

"Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."—ST. MATT. xiii. 45, 46.

JESUS CHRIST meets us by many roads and many fashions. Whatever be our track in life, down that, if possible, He will come, along that He will lie in wait for us. He will leave nothing unattempted, by which He may win us into that kingdom of heaven whose frontiers He is ever pushing forward. Here in this parable He sketches some of these manifold shifts to which He is driven in order to reach us, the manœuvres by which He successfully adapts Himself to our wayward and wilful wanderings. Last Sunday we recalled how He beguiles and attracts the attention of those who do not suspect His presence, and who make no direct effort to approach or discover Him. We spoke of those to whom human life appears to be a mere bare and common field, without anything in it that kindles wonder or prompts exertion. And for such as these, as they plod along conventional ways, as they toil through the routine of daily labour, Christ's only opportunity, as it were, is to hide Himself deep within this habitual commonplace world of theirs, as a treasure in a field, so that one day they may stumble up against it, and by the shock of that abrupt experience may be startled into a mighty joy, in the heat of which they may rush off and act, and sell all that they have, if only they may buy that precious field. So the blessed snare is laid for them.

But there are others of another type altogether than these.

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 20, being the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity and the Eve of St. Matthew, 1891.

There are men who have never taken life as a plain common field; who have never accepted things as they come with easy indifference; to whom it has never seemed that everything is "much of a muchness." No, these are men whose anxiety it is to make distinctions, to detect the good and the evil; they are alive to the niceties of difference, their faculties are sensitive to all shades of excellence; and they are these by nature; as we say, they grow that way. They have fine organizations, and clean tastes, and delicate lives; they recoil from anything coarse, or base, or ugly; their minds are equitable and their judgment is balanced, and their perception is keen, and their soul ardent. Unlike those others who again and again pass over the field without a suspicion, without a hope of the hidden treasure, these, on the contrary, are all awake and on the watch; they live in expectation of a find, of a surprise; they seek after the exceptional and the peculiar. Wherever they go they look below the surface of life. They have little interest in the multitude of conventional affairs; they pass these by in their eager pursuit of some rare prize—a prize not offered probably to their eager gaze, but needing to be discovered, to be unearthed. This is what they hunt for, and in comparison with this all else for them may go to the wall. Their hearts are set on uncovering its excellence. They desire to win out of each scene or experience some touch of grace, some breath of promise, which shall stand alone, select and incomparable.

There are such men as these, who go up and down this earth of ours as merchants, who seek goodly pearls; and these, too, Jesus will follow after. Only they will require other methods of enticing than those by which He startles the unconcerned. To win these this kingdom of heaven of His must take a different shape. In the case of the unconcerned, the point lay in the violent contrast between that which they anticipated and that which they found. They fancied it was a field, and they found a treasure. It was the

last thing they looked for. In a moment, without apparent attention, without exertion of their own, they are suddenly brought up short by unexampled wonder; and so they are shot over, as it were, by the extravagance of their astonishment, into the kingdom of heaven. But now we have a totally changed manner. To the men who are already on the search for a wonder of pre-eminent cost, the kingdom of heaven conforms itself to their anticipations. It takes the shape of the very thing which they pursue; it falls exactly into the line of their advance; it arrays itself in the vesture of their ideal. They are not seeking it, indeed. They are seeking goodly pearls—seeking some precious thing which seems to them the rarest and lovliest endowment of life; but, lo! in among their pearls, itself a pearl, in the form of that which they value so dearly, not different in kind, but super-eminent in degree, goodliest among the goodly, and rarest among the rare, there it lies—the kingdom of heaven!

It is just what they dreamed of, only yet more perfect. It is just what they have loved in the treasures already amassed, only it surpasses them in purity and in light; it has outdone them in their own chosen field; it has slipped itself in among their cherished favourites; and now these, their former prizes, look dull and dim by the side of this new radiance. Where they were brilliant, this strange arrival, in its solitary splendour, is worth them all; and, therefore, the very instinct of excellence, which had already sacrificed all lesser gains for the joy of winning those jewels which had before charmed them, now bids them let all these go, if only so they may gain this unique excellence which outweighs them all. True to their character, those merchants, who all along have been seeking goodly pearls, will, when they find the one pearl of great price, go and sell all that they had already gained, and buy it. To those who seek pearls, the kingdom of heaven reveals itself as the pearl of pearls—the consummation of all their desires.

Again and again the truth of this parable was realized in the first ages of the faith. As for instance, those who had bent all their powers to the pursuit of intellectual truth found in the gospel of the word of God, the very truth itself which they had sought so long and so painfully. These men had toiled from point to point, they had never been satisfied with the common and conventional means by which the multitude lazily lulled their reason to sleep. These heathen philosophers had sifted their observations; they had interrogated their experience; they had dived into the deep seas, and had returned breathless with lurking treasures. They had secured most goodly pearls, clean, luminous, pure; and these they had collected far and wide, whenever they could hear news of any precious thing, which had been got together all over the wide earth—in Egypt, in India, in Chaldea. And, above all, we know the merchants had gone out seeking the goodliest pearls, the truths of the soul, of worth which can perish never. And these pearls were in our Lord's day one of the glories of that ancient life. Men gazed at them with bewildered fascination as things too beautiful to be endured, so fair, so radiant, so perfect, these goodly pearls of truth. And then, as they pored over them, as they fingered them with reverent awe, as they passed from city to city to gaze at them, one day there would fall under their eyes, they hardly knew how, a vision of truth, that was like their former visions like, but how different! It was the truth as they had already pictured it; it tallied with all that Greek or Eastern had ever told them; it touched the same points; it answered the same questions, used the same phrases, satisfied the like longings; it caught up all the old voices to which they had listened so long. It was just what they wanted; only it was so much more, so far better, and fuller, and richer; by the side of its light all else which before had seemed bright looked blurred and dim.

One of these men—one of these seekers after truth—has

left us a record of just such a find; let us hear it in his own words. It is Justin Martyr writing in Ephesus, probably about the year 136. He tells of the old heathen days when he had first felt the longing to share in the "wisdom which is verily the highest possession, the most valued of God, to whom it alone tends and unites us." "With this hope in my heart, I gave myself first to a Stoic teacher, but found I got nothing told me about God—for my teacher himself knew nothing, and professed that such knowledge was unnecessary—I left him and went to another—a Peripatetic. He thought himself a clever fellow. He kept me with him but a first few days, and then he asked me to fix a salary for him in order that our intercourse might be profitable to both; at which I left him, not thinking him to be a genuine philosopher at all. But my soul was still bursting with a passionate desire to hear the sweet and excellent voice of philosophy, and so I went to a famous Pythagorean." And then he tells at some length how this man required of him a prolonged study of music, and astronomy, and geometry, before he approached the knowledge of the higher life; and he tells us he could not bear this long delay, and finally he passed to a Platonist, who delighted him and spoke of the Invisible; "and quickly I thought to be wise, and expected, if it were not for my dull sight, I should in a moment look upon God. And then, while I was in this frame of mind, one day I had a wish for a quiet meditation, and so I went to a bit of ground not far from the sea; and there, just as I was nearing the place where I expected to be alone with my thoughts, a man with a pleasant countenance, and gentle and dignified mien, came following me a little behind. I turned upon him and stood with my eyes fixed upon him, to which he said, 'Do you know me?' I denied it. 'Then why look upon me so narrowly?' 'Because I am surprised to find you here.'" And the old man explained that he was looking for some friends to return from the sea. But why is Justin there? And Justin, too,

explains why he has himself come to that lonely place. It is to get at the true reason that governs all, uplifted by which he may look down from on high on others struggling helplessly below who had nothing sane or dear to God. A long discussion follows, in which the old man convinces him of the uncertainty of the teaching. "But if Pythagoras and Plato failed, what teacher can promise more certain knowledge?" So he asks, and the old man replies: "There have been men blessed, upright, and beloved of God, who are called prophets. These alone have seen the truth, not as reasoners about it, but as witnesses of it." "Pray, then," said the old man, "pray thou that the gates of this light may be opened, too, for thee; for these things can only be seen and known by those to whom God has given understanding." Justin saw that old man no more, "but an affection, a love arose within me for those prophets, the friends of Christ; and as I turned it over within my breast, I became at last convinced that here, indeed, lay the one and only sure and worthy philosophy."

There it all is: the merchant seeking goodly pearls finds the one pearl above all price. His search carries him along the right path home; Jesus Christ meets him by the way he has taken. He has sought philosophy, and as philosophy Christ finds him—as a philosophy that surpasses all other philosophies in the exhibition of that very truth which they less perfectly embodied. So the pearl of great price flashed in upon him there, by the lone sea-shore where that quiet old man so strangely found him. He was faithful to the vision. Jingling his old treasures, he did not cling in faint hesitation to the great names of former teachers, deep as their charm had been for him. No; for they themselves had taught him enough to know the value of the truth now disclosed. He was true to their teaching, for he abandoned them all, he forsook all, for the sake of the truth itself; he sold all that he had, and bought that pearl of great price. So he became the first great Christian apologist, the forerunner of many

a ripe student in the universities at Athens and Alexandria. So the light broke in upon these men, as they mused and studied, with a force that overtopped all the wisdom of the schools. Here was the knowledge that turned to foolishness the wisdom of the world; and those then who loved Wisdom, and who had sought her faithfully, now knew her, saw her face, and surrendered wholly to her. "Wisdom was justified of her children."

Nor was it only the seekers after the pearls of truth who found in Christ their own garnered stores surpassed and dimmed. The Greek artist who had sought far and wide the delicate and goodly pearl of beauty, hardly could have dreamed that in this strange hoard of Galilæans—who crept away, with eyes aslant, from the hills and heights where shone in gold and ivory, or in tinted marble, the calm splendour of the Phidian gods—that he would discover in them an ideal of spiritual beauty which should evoke in him a yet loftier and purer effort than that which owed its inspiration to Apollo. But so it was to be. Goodly pearls, indeed, were those already laid, stored in the memory of the Hellenic imagination; but there was a a pearl of yet more enthralling charm, which was to disclose itself to those who could look beneath the cover, that made the form of the Son of man appear at first, in contrast with the physical loveliness of youth and health, without beauty that we should desire Him. Born in a stable, wandering without a home in which to lay His head, scourged, and mocked, and hung upon a tree, He yet was to draw away from those fair Grecian deities, and to concentrate upon Himself all the passion and aspiration of those imaginative men to whom beauty was the all in all, and who found it transfigured to incomparable excellence in Him whom they ever vied to paint, whether as a baby at His mother's breast at Bethlehem, or as a man with wide arms of love outstretched upon the cross, or laid again upon the white corpse, or where He lay as a child across His mother's knees. Here is the beauty that has conquered

art in its own field. Men sought beauty, and so seeking, Christ offered Himself as the very ideal in whom art might attain its crown and triumph.

Or, again, there were men of old seeking yet another goodly pearl—the pearl of righteousness; there were men to whom the right conduct of life was as a very passion. There, in moral goodness, they pursued the type of all that to them was most fair and of good report, trained, perfected, polished, purified, calm and serene. It was for this cause they lived—to make life itself wide and exalted. And what pains and study they spent on it! Pagan, Pythagorean, Chaldæan—to which master will you give yourself? These were the questions which agitated them. Above all, they sought the pearl of a good life, and, for such as these, how startling it was—how overpowering the surprise—as there dawned upon them the conviction that these same humble Galilæan folk had hold of some secret of holy living by which peasants and women and children could attain to a moral peace, such as Marcus Aurelius on the throne, with all the resources of culture, and with the rarest opportunities of employing them, could with difficulty command. In him this right conduct, this moral serenity was something strained, artificial, laborious; in them it was free, spontaneous, secure. How was this? Whence came it? The emperor, the very type of the highest seekers after righteousness, was indeed, as has been well said by a living writer, "a master in the craft of self-correction; yet with him it was a melancholy service—a service about which one moves about solemn and oppressed. This forced optimism had no secret of genuine cheerfulness in it; but here, in these Christians, there was an expression of wonderful happiness—the broad expansion of a joyful soul in people upon whom some soul-subduing experience had wrought heroically. All that had been most valued in the ancient world seemed to be in them harmonized by some transforming spirit, which begat an unique expression of freshness and animation. It seemed as if some

profound regeneration of the body by the spirit had begun, and already gone a great way, so that the very countenances of men and women and children had an amenity about them, a mystic amiability, an unction, a serenity of satisfaction, which contrasted very forcibly with the imperial philosopher and his heavy burden of unrelieved melancholy." So a writer has drawn for us the fascination of a life of goodness, as it showed itself to those who had touched the highest levels of morality. Here, in this company of obscure men, was the thing so long sought after; here it was, only better, and fairer, and purer; here it was, not as the rare privilege of the few, but the open heritage of the mass; here it was, not secluded and timid in select corners, but bold enough and forcible enough to lay hold of all that most needed regeneration; here, indeed, was the hope of hopes, and treasure of treasures, while those who were not afraid let all their old moral stores go, that they might buy this new pearl of great price—the goodness and holiness of Jesus Christ.

Here then truly, my beloved, is the significance of our parable. If you seek the highest excellence in any department of human life, you will find this same Jesus crowning the very excellence you seek. He can outdo all your anticipations. Is it truth you are bent on winning, the solution of the unchanging problems which this strange universe provokes? Well, follow along that road far enough; follow with zeal, with patience; and at last the vision meets you, challenges you—the voice of Him who says, "I am the Truth; abide in Me, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Is it beauty you desire? Seek for it, seek it in its highest, purest, tenderest forms, seek with spiritual passion and unflagging feet; and at last there is a vision shown you, the vision of eternal loveliness in Him who is "the beloved," "the chiefest among ten thousand," He "who looketh forth from the windows," "who feedeth among the lilies," "who is altogether lovely." Or is it goodness that enthrals you, the

hunger for righteousness, the lordly necessities of duty, the need of a good conscience, clean and undefiled, of the controlled appetite, of the disciplined emotion, of the steady will, of the free, unencumbered, moral motion, the calm, serene truthfulness? Strive, strive with all your pains to secure this, to win your upward way; and then it cannot fail; but at last, high above the highest point that you will attain, will stand the Christ, the Christ challenging you to convict Him of any sin, the Christ supreme and spotless; yet not far above you in remote rebuke, aloof and inaccessible, but coming down close to you, inviting, welcoming, enfolding, saying, "Come unto Me; I will give you rest; take My yoke, learn of Me; I am meek and lowly of heart; yea, and more, I am made unto you, made within you, righteousness, sanctification, redemption—not the righteousness of man, not your own righteousness, but the righteousness of God, which is unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

But many, no doubt, here are confessing that they have not been as keen merchants at all, seeking goodly pearls, not as artists or as poets, or as moralists who aspire after any special perfection; and the promise of the parable has no application then for them. Yet, every one of us who is worth anything at all, any one who is in any slight way loyal to his manhood, has some department of his life in which he counts upon some excellence. There is some direction in which he tries to be at his best, in which he does not like to fail; he has some virtue which he would not willingly let slip. He may confess to failures in other sections of life, but here, in that particular field, he holds fast a certain standard—perhaps it is truth, perhaps it is honesty, perhaps it is trust, in some it is purity. He, at all events, fastens on a pearl. If so, it will often happen that just in that very department Christ takes us at our word and reveals to us a yet more excellent way; we catch sight of something better still than what we have done hitherto. The law of truth, or of purity, or of honesty, refuses to stop

short at the point where we stand; it goes further: it demands from us a cleaner heart. This seems to say, "Come up higher; look at what the Christ asks of you in matters like these." So the light breaks.

And we know that at such a moment there is a temptation to recoil, to protest, "Just in that direction! Why, there I have done so well, I am level with the best of my fellows; I flatter myself that few about me are so strict. Why am I to be fretted just there? Why this new call, this new suggestion?" So we revolt. The natural man sees how much good he has done already. Why not be satisfied? why try the impossible? And yet what is happening in reality is our reward from God for our previous efforts. We had sought a goodly pearl, and so Christ in response shows us a yet fairer one, His own pearl of great price. We have arrived at a certain moral standard of our own. "Well done! Now look at My standard; try your life by that. Does it stand? does it glisten still with its white purity of light?" Truly you have a long way to go. Christ out-tops us just there where we most value ourselves; and it is His love for our gallant efforts that makes Him stir us with vague discomfort, so that the dull lack-lustre pearls that we had so laboriously collected seem now of little worth. His love still provokes us, by a sight of His own blessed jewel of great price, to go and sell all that we ourselves have hitherto won by our own efforts, at any cost, to buy Him. That is His law. "To him that hath shall be given." That is God's method, to draw us by our good up to His better, to challenge our better aspirations by something higher still. "If you have been faithful in little, come up and be faithful in much." He loved the young man who had kept the commandments from his youth, and, because of that love, He asked yet more of him still—"Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor."

Follow Him, my brethren, wherever, in any form, that challenge meets you; you cannot draw back without moral loss. If God has once shown you something better than your best,

it is impossible for you to be as you were before. That which looked once so good to you, before you saw the new sight, has now become dull and spiritless; it will not kindle joy and hope any longer. The memory of that better still will remain deep within—the memory of the holiness of Jesus. You cannot go back again; your eyes are open to see what might be; you see the more excellent way; you see the purity of heart that no cloud obscures, and that can be yours. Every desire is yours, and where He is you may be also by His grace, who gives Himself to you. If you ever catch sight of this higher, better self of purer peace, of a will more free, of a love more unselfish, than what now is yours, do not delay, do not fear; make for the very best that you can see, go and sell all that you have, and win for yourself that rare and precious gift which is worth all the world beside—win it even as he whose day we have now begun to keep (St. Matthew), who rose from the receipt of custom, and followed Jesus without delay.

BEARING THE CROSS.[1]

"And there went great multitudes with Him: and He turned, and said, . . . Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."—ST. LUKE xiv. 25, 27.

LENT is here again; and once more the shadows begin to strike across the sunlit hope that was born on Christmas Day; once more there begins to be a sense of trouble abroad; the air thickens with ugly rumours of ill. And in the face of it, and, perhaps, with special force in a university, there stirs in us a movement of opposition, of repugnance. Our natural instincts fret and protest against the enforced discipline.

There is, first, the instinctive protest of our boyhood, as it passes upward into youth; everything in us at the moment in bud, is on the tiptoe of expectation, is telling of advance, is impatient of check or bar. It is not in the mood to understand the lifted forefinger which warns and threatens. What is it all about, we ask, this serious talk, this mournful muttering? Why this anxiety, this chill, this depression, this urgency? Why this onslaught on human gladness, this maiming of our healthy and springing manhood? Why this dull and stupid insistence on merely negative excellences? This is not what we look for from religion. Faith should hearten and sanctify life, and life should mean expansion, and the world was made very good, and our bodies were given us for pure and fair service. Religion should enter, so we fancied, to sanction all that is excellent, and lovely, and of good report; it should come to encourage, and to enlarge, and to gladden, and to sweeten, and to fulfil, and to crown. Was not this the good

[1] Preached in Great St. Mary's Church, on Sunday, February 15, 1891.

news of peace and good-will to all men? Was not this the message of the incarnation? God is come in the flesh to hallow and transfigure all that is most human; to give it all worth, and dignity, and purpose. This was the significance of His epiphanies. We are ready to look for Him to manifest His glory through the humanity that we surrendered to Him; we trusted to Him to flush our imperfect offering with the glow and the heat of His new wine; we were prepared to lay at His feet the richest outcome of our happy days—our gold, and frankincense and myrrh.

But just as we begin to apprehend what faith might mean to us, as the hallowing of human life, down there falls upon us this cold shadow of restraint, this Lenten talk, with its unworthy anxieties, its morbid fears, its tiresome and unmanly rules; with all that is most repellent and ungenerous, and timorous and repressive.

At a certain point in our growth it is impossible not to be sensible of this disappointment, not to formulate some such complaint. And it would be wrong if we did not feel this disagreeable shock of repugnance. For the severer teaching of Christianity presupposes some such experience as that which actually and historically preceded it.

The Christian creed, in its assertion of the passion and death of Jesus Christ, was not the creed of a young world, fresh with the dew of that morning when God pronounced it to be very good, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. It was not the faith of primitive or patriarchal days, when all was still new and simple and delightful. No: the world was old when Christ was born into it; He entered into to meet the needs of an earth that had long ago been wearied with disappointment; and had sickened with disgust. The youth of the race was already lost or broken; the ugly disfigurement of age was upon it; man was long past the day when he could look forward to taking life in its stride. Very dark was his outlook; very miserable was his memory of inward wrong. The

earth was old, and man's heart was old, and the faith that was brought near to him in that dismal hour, bore in it, therefore, of necessity, the seriousness and the grimness of age. How, indeed, could man have ever responded, then, to a creed that spoke only of some cheerful and light-hearted promise? It would have seemed to him but as an idle and a mocking tale. For he had been shown the bitter sides of life, and he could not be startled to find in the creed that offered to deal with that life a tone of patience, of austerity, of melancholy, of anguish. There is ugly work ahead if his past is to be undone, and he knew it; there will be some bad hours of dreadful anxiety before the clutch of his sin is loosened, before the disease is purged from out his bones. And to face such hours there must of sheer necessity be a girding of the loins and a bracing of nerves, a slow discipline, a penitent watchfulness, a weary preparation, a day long and dull, of fasting and of prayer. Any one who has ever felt his youthfulness begin to die out and away from him, any one who has known the bitterness with which his early and best hopes break themselves against the dead set of facts, and under the folly of his own sin, is prepared for all this business of Lent. He understands the voices that are speaking to him; he has intelligence of their suspicions; his ears are open to the low mutterings of alarm. He is not so repelled or so afraid as "the laughing loves" that ran so freely about the base of the Cup of Life are being withdrawn, and in their place "skull-things, in order grim, grow out about the rim." His earlier ideal fades, and he sadly watches it go; and yet it is not all loss he feels; there is a new call which speaks of a higher and a stronger task that is opening out upon him. Losing much he will yet gain more: "Grow old along with me," the message is ever whispering to his soul!

> "The best is yet to be!
> Grow old along with me!"

Yet this experience cannot ever be fully anticipated. We may warn; we may forestall it is as well as we may, but each soul must still repeat for itself the story of the race. Each must run forward in the old hopefulness, to renew, in his own person, the old blunder, the old stumble, the old dismay. Until life brings its later experiences, the young cannot quite believe that the traditional fall is ever really going to happen to them. And therefore to them the creed on its darker side will always have something in it that disappoints and repels. We who propose to interpret the creed to them can but wait for the day which will absolutely justify it to their own personal lives, and in the meantime can appeal to the obvious harmony between our creed and the facts of human life, as they stand recorded on every side.

Do these facts answer, we may ask them, to our boyish anticipations? Does life, as we see it about us, does it fall into the mould of our young hopes? Is it all hearty, and healthy, and cheerful, and tolerant? Does it look as if it would work out on the lines of free, spontaneous expansion for all the natural instincts? Has it nothing in it which nips and crushes any confidence in such a development of man as belongs to the tree planted by the waterside, that brings forth its fruit in due season?

Surely nothing in the Christian insistence on cross or passion is more repellent or austere than the witness of hard and naked facts. And Christianity is, above all things, real. It grapples with facts: it lays itself alongside of the earth as it actually is. It stretches itself over our sickly and perishing humanity, as Elisha over the body of the boy, hand to hand, foot to foot, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes. This manhood in us, as we know it, and see, and feel, and touch it—with its infinite pathos, with its broken aspirations, with its beauty lying chilled and benumbed and stricken—it is this, and not another, which the breath of the Lord and the heat of the Lord will cover, and quicken, and heal. Christianity is

nothing if it is not real—if it does not lie level with actual experience. And facts disappoint, therefore the creed disappoints. Facts disfigure and belabour and beat under; therefore the creed speaks of disfigurement, of keeping under the body, of bruising and wounding. Facts startle us with the conviction of our strange impotence; therefore the creed surprises us with the severity of its accusation. Facts are intolerant of wrong; and the creed comes to no terms with sin. Facts are terrible; and the creed has its terrors.

And, if this be so, then we can but beg of you, while still the glow and the glory of living are with you, not to be discomfited because there are matters included in the Christian creed that do not yet, and cannot yet, commend themselves to you.

There is much experience that still awaits you in life, of wholly different type to that which now is your main portion and lot; and the creed has got to cover all the experience ahead of you, as well as that within the bounds of which you now stand.

It does not force upon you the sterner stress, before it be time. It can be very patient with you: it will wait until you come to it, point by point. It is content to minister to each stage of your growth. It greets the child in us, with the freedom and the fragrance of the birth at Bethlehem. It responds to our first youth with its epiphany in the Temple, laying its sanction, by the scene, on the sudden and absorbing passion of mental inquiry, enthralled by which the soul may forget mother and home; or again, in the epiphany of the marriage feast, when it pours its transfiguring energy into our human joys.

Then, as our practical manhood realizes and faces its task amid the work-a-day world of man, it challenges its vigorous and confident conscience with the moral law laid down in the Sermon on the Mount; or, perhaps, it bids it rise to the noblest service; to sell all that it has, and give to the poor,

and come and follow the Son of man! So it adapts its call to each moment in our fate; and says little as yet of all that it has behind, that is, as yet, sealed and closed; all the peculiar secrets of the faith—the mystery of the cross, and of the redemption, and of absolution and of regeneration—secrets which it will reserve, until the day when the brave and gallant life that started with such splendid promise of achievement shall have reached the discovery that, indeed, it has nought at all to bring to the Master, but "the troubled spirit," "the broken and the contrite heart."

No! it will not press you hard before your time; only it must ask of you—now, while you are young—first, to be prepared to find much of it more or less unintelligible, until you have traversed the experiences to which it responds—until you have fainted under the needs which it relieves; it asks you to remember the plain truth that you cannot, while still the Bridegroom is with you, know the full blessing that comes to them that fast and mourn.

And, secondly, it asks you, on the strength of such proof as you have already made of its veracity, to trust it further in its warnings of peril, which it declares to be inevitably ahead of you. In giving this warning, it has, as I have said, the backing of man's universal experience, which witnesses, by every voice it possesses, to the disappointments and distresses that await every single soul in its passage through this troubled world.

And you may well trust it, therefore, if already, before you are well aware of the strain that will follow, it bids you nerve yourselves, by some preparatory discipline, for an encounter that is bound to come. "What I do unto you, my son, thou canst not know now; but thou shalt know hereafter." That is its quiet pleading, as it urges on you some Lenten exercise in self-control, in self-restraint, in self-denial. Not now, indeed! Thou canst not understand its meaning now! No! But hereafter. Ah! hereafter! Hereafter, there will come

an hour of fierce strain and of desperate warfare! How terrible if then you find yourself with will unbraced,—with courage untrained,—without having ever learned to bend under a moral demand, to surrender a personal desire, to tread under your ghostly foe, to hold yourself unspotted by pollution. Hereafter you will know what it would have been, if, in your earlier days, as Lent came round, you had at least fitted on your armour, and had found out where it rubbed, and had got your weapons in hand, and had girt yourself about with the girdle of obedience. Oh! trust the teaching, and be wise in time!

But the protest against Lent, as an unmeaning anxiety, is not confined to the boyish confidence of our youth. The full manhood that comes to us, can so easily arrive without disclosing the deeper secret that it is intended to reveal. And it does so, above all, in places such as a university, where the development is so encompassed with favourable environment, that it comes about imperceptibly, without effort or struggle. Here the very goodness of the conditions smothers up the secret intention, which governs the growth. That intention lurks behind, underground; nothing unearths it; nothing forces it out into the light. Thus life may grow more and more perfect, while the purpose of life becomes more and more hopelessly concealed. Yet only according to the measure with which that purpose is brought into the foreground can the austere claim of religion ever be recognised.

For life has a purpose; it does not end in itself, in its own growth, in its own perfection. That is the assertion which is the root of all religion. Life is good as looking out towards a culmination of God. This is its interpretation; and, in man, this purpose, common to all life, becomes conscious of itself, it recognises its own interpretation; the intention beams in him voluntary and free; he can identify himself with his own end; and this identification is religion. In religion, man, under the call of God from above, under the pressure of the

instructing Spirit of God, offers himself, surrenders himself to the intention which is already in him. He gives, with joyful freedom, himself and all that is in him to God, who made him both what he is now and what he will become hereafter. Herein, in this vital and voluntary surrender, and herein alone, does he discover and exercise his true manhood. By virtue of this alone does he step out on to his proper plane above the level at which animal life is arrested, and disclose his moral character. For animal life, however exquisite and excellent, is animal still so long as it is given to God, it knows not how. The powers that are in it devote themselves to their inherent task by the very condition of their existence. Under the compulsion of an external pressure, under the movement of the inward impulse, the unconscious life goes forward in the most available directions; it makes the best of its opportunities; it brings and adds to the sum of facts all that its native capacities permit it to add and bring. It is given, and taken, and used, in obedience to some secret guidance, which, for lack of understanding it, we name instinct.

But man reviews himself, and according to the degree to which he can accomplish the review, he adds something of his own to the sum of forces by which he is directed; his own capacity to review what he has been, to weigh what he is, to review and to foresee his fate, is an element which enters into the determination of what he will be. According to the measure of this element he is what we call free and therefore moral; and according to the degree with which he can transfigure that national review and that moral determination into a glad personal recognition of himself as in God, and for God, he is spiritual, he is religious.

Here, then, is the sole dividing line between himself and the animal. His capacity, his skill, these are all supplied him under the same conditions as those which govern the lower grade of life. Heredity and environment handle and endow him, enrich or specialize him; he is the creature of birth, of

circumstances, of accident, of nature. So far, for all his superiority of gift, he might yet be only a higher mammal with a subtler arrangement of brain, with a finer organization of nerve.

But the sundering line runs sharp and clear at the point, whereever it comes, where the body of instincts drop from under him, and he is left standing, in suspense, in pause, beholding himself; estimating his own power. What will be the issue of the estimate? For that is the sole matter at stake; the matter estimated is, so to speak, indifferent. It may be that he is reviewing a mass of splendid forces that lie ordered and disciplined in a vigorous and healthy frame. Or it may be that what he sees is a poor, thin, slight, frail, hesitating current of vitality that trickles wearily through a sickly body. The difference between the two is religiously and spiritually nought. All vital difference turns solely on what happens when the power of consideration closes in an act. What will he do with himself? Will he surrender all that he reviews to the God who gave it? Will he make the act? Will he take it all up in his hands, and make the offering of himself? "O my God, my Father, maker and lover of my soul! Behold! all that I am, all that I am able to be, it is thine. 'Of Thine own do we give Thee!' Use me, possess me, direct me, not for mine own pleasure, but for Thine own honour!"

That is the spiritual surrender in us, which it is the one office of our days on earth to evoke, and to enlarge. And, now, it is easy to anticipate the peril of which I spoke, the peril that the very excellence of the gifts should conceal and stifle their secret purpose. For they may satisfy us by their very excellence, they may lull us by their obvious superiority. The very sight of the lovely array of gracious and beneficent powers with which we are endowed is pleasant and engaging. And still more delightful is it to detect, as education develops their facilities, all that they have a possibility of attaining. How thrilling the outbreak of the imagination, when it first

puts out its power, under the stimulus of intellectual companionship, and lightens from one end of heaven to the other. And the fancy and the wit. How exhilarating their spontaneous exercise. How they kindle! how they glow! And our early successes, when first we find ourselves recognised, sought after, appreciated, popular, gifted. It seems as if this, indeed, were life itself—just to taste and practise our gifts. Life, we say, consists in feeling ourselves alive. Just to live freely, just to grow, just to bring out all that is in us, just to develop, and expand, and improve, and increase; this by itself will occupy all our time, our pains, our interest, our energy. Surely this is enough.

There is the peril of our early manhood, and the deception may only too easily intensify as the years slide smoothly on. And the peril will be at its height in those whom habit and temper tend naturally towards virtue. These have good and pure endowments of character imbued or ingrained. Circumstance favours and answers and finds all that is best. Within and without everything combines to force them forward into the paths of righteousness. They have good-nature, and this is as salt to keep them kindly, pleasant, helpful; they have high and varied interests, and these forces dominate their desires, and save them from lower and grosser aims; they have self-control, and ordered emotions, and a strong will, and a refined delicacy of taste, and they despise the lower discords of passion, and they recoil in disgust from coarse temptations. They have an honourable position, and they take kindly to it; they find a natural satisfaction in exercising its ministries, in fulfilling its responsibilities; they take a fastidious pride in doing all that it is incumbent on them to do, with the highest possible finish; they are, perhaps, dedicated to some post of trust and influence, and they are ever more and more busied with its beneficent activities; and they discover increasing aptitudes for valuable work; and a grateful world makes use of them to the full. Life, without any special effort of their

own, takes for them a fair, and gracious, and dignified form; they pass by its inviting stages; they work hard, but they are glad to work; it is their joy to be in full swing. Their high reputation becomes itself a new protection, a new call; they shrink from the slightest act that would bring slur or suspicion upon their accredited name. A positive sin would wound their self-respect; it would be intolerable; they could not endure the indignity of self-condemnation. Their own conscience pricks them with disagreeable reproach whenever they consciously fail to reach the high standard which it is their pride to keep ever before them.

So they live, and can anything be worthier? And all of it is real and genuine; and they feel it so, and so feeling, justly they cannot but despise the moral inconsistencies and hypocrisies of many who profess religion more vehemently than they do themselves. "A faith is known by its fruits"; and here are the fruits: they stand the Lord's test so far better than those poor limp creatures who are so full of spiritual aspirations, and yet sin with such doubtful and scandalous practice. It is not that they themselves are necessarily irreligious. Nay, the self-deception will be at its very height in the cases where inclination or circumstances have conspired to carry them churchwards. These like religion; they are happy in presenting themselves before God: not the least in hypocritical regard to external custom, but because the order and decency and honourable dignity of worship form a natural and instinctive environment to lives so harmoniously framed. They find a happy response in the recognition of a Father with a Judge. The voices of holiness, the promises of peace mingle, easily and sweetly, with their own clean desires; and long habit has now confirmed all this, and has added to it a completeness that perfects itself, enduing it with the friendliness of familiarity, clothing it with the grace of ancient tenderness, with immemorial associations. So it grows—in the rhythmic regularity of seasonable years—and what has Lent

to do with such a graceful growth as this? Why this interruption to its even movements? Why this anxious self-questioning? Why this peevish and discomfortable suspicion? True, there may be corrections and modifications which advancing experience may suggest; no man can afford to neglect himself; no man is above the possibility of improvement; a wise conscience will always be on the watch against an infirmity; it will never assume impeccability. That is acknowledged. But that is not the tone of Lent; that is not the spirit of the Passion for which Lent prepares. Something much more relentless and apprehensive and fierce is in these Lenten threats than anything which self-culture can tolerate or even understand.

Yet why? they ask. Could life be better? Could it manifest itself in a more excellent way? "Life!" we retort. What life? Human life? Why, it is not yet begun! All this that we have pictured is but the life of a man as the crown of the animal world—the life of an animal beautifully endowed—carried to its highest perfection—become moral and religious, as it were, by the development of instinct. But the one ultimate step by which the manhood in them is to emerge from under all this over-structure—by which it is to come out into the light of day—is to disclose and discover itself; that one ultimate step still remains to be taken.

What is the step by which the manhood stands clear of all encumbrage? The gift of himself to God! The dedication of himself to God! It is for this that all this excellent preparation has been made. Nothing we grant could exceed the fairness and the perfection of the materials so collected for the offering. Nothing could better the endowments that now lie ready for the great act. Ah! the honour, the delight, the splendour of having so much to bring. All this beautiful life, with its delicate decencies, its busy aptitudes, its disciplined capacities—a precious gift, indeed, for any of us to be permitted to hold in our hands. A gift most dear to Him, from whom alone all good gifts come.

And He, the great God, is looking for it; He counts much upon it. All this is gold of His committed in trust. There would be joy, indeed, in heaven if such a man's heart, thus splendidly endowed, were to kindle within him, and he were to raise his eyes to the great white throne, and the companies of heaven, and the golden altar, and to lift up the whole possession in the hands of the Spirit, and lay it at the feet of the Lamb, even with the blessed ones, who for ever cast down their golden crowns upon the sea of glass. Ah! that would be, indeed, to make manifest the image of God in him, the image of Him who surrendered for us all that He held dearest, even His own Son.

Then there would be, indeed, the happy interchange that should knit father to child, and child to father—the interchange of gifts which makes life one continuous act of love. "Son, thou art ever with me; all that I have is yours. Yes! my Father, Thou hast given me all, and therefore all that I have is yours." Over such an act as this there would be a joy among the angels, far, far above all that breaks out over the returning prodigal. But alas! how is it that God obtains from the prodigals that lower joy, while so rare, so pitifully rare is it that He can win the higher joy from the good son in the house?

Somehow those prodigals whose career has been so tiresome, so base, do nevertheless get hold of the one secret better and quicker than the ninety-nine good, honest, moral, useful men, infinitely more companionable, more agreeable, more consistent, more pleasant, more manly, more noble than they, who yet never have made the deed of surrender, never have made the supreme act, and in the face of the Father which is in heaven, have sent out a cry from their innermost souls, saying, "Lord, I am here to do Thy will, O Lord," "I live; yet now not I, but Thou livest in me."

There it is, the one thing needful. It will take no denial; it will admit of no excuse. By it alone we enter the kingdom,

which is the kingdom of self-sacrifice. Have we done it, you and I? It is a searching question, anxious, irresistible. It breaks up so much that is comfortable. It pushes aside so much of our habitual good complacency. "Yes!" it keeps saying. You have, no doubt, an excellent heritage of youth, health, good spirits. They are good: but are they given? your talent—it is very effective, but is it given? your honesty, your sincerity, they are most praiseworthy: but are they given? your good name, your popularity, your cleverness, your steadiness, your industry, your good humour, your usefulness, your refinement, your delight in all that is gracious and fair, your literary skill, your delicate taste, your earnest work, your religious danger, your spiritual sensibility—all these are excellent material for the offering. But are they dedicated? Are they surrendered? Has the flame of sacrifice ever kindled upon them?

For if not, then your very goodness is soothing to fatal slumber your true and divine manhood, and you will waken up at last only to understand why it is that the very publicans and harlots are trooping into heaven before you.

Dear brethren, a searching question, and one upon which our Lord lays again and again alarming emphasis. Surely you and I are the last who ought to protest against the anxiety of Lent. We are those who need most urgently the serious recall, the piercing examination. The fairer and cleaner our lives, and the smoother our days, the more strident should be the note of warning that shakes us from out our self-approval, and forces us to ask whether for all our gifts we ourselves are yet ungiven. We are surely but too apt to be among that easy multitude who followed without much anxiety behind the feet of the Lord, upon whom He thought it well to turn with the sharp reminder, "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me, cannot be My disciple."

RESISTANCE TO EVIL.[1]

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." —St. Matt. v. 38–41.

"Resist not evil," and yet, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"; "Resist not evil," and yet, "Put on the whole armour of God, take the shield of faith, and the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, for ye are wrestling against principalities and powers; therefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand." Are there two minds here? Is Christ at variance with His apostles? Does His method of encountering evil differ from theirs? Is the temper that He advocates the reverse of that which they promise? Let us look a little closer. "Resist not evil"—but that must mean, first, evil that is outside you, evil that cannot effect an entry within you, that cannot master, or possess, or occupy, or spoil you; for all such evil as this you must resist to the very death. You are pledged to this, both as children of God, and as citizens of the kingdom of Christ. For, first, you hold your lives from another, from God, who gave them. You stand pledged to preserve them for Him, pure, and clean, and untainted. And, secondly, you hold them anew, as bought back for Him at the price of Christ's blood. They are not your own, they are His, whose gift you may not waste, or

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral on Sunday afternoon, July 27th, being the Eighth Sunday after Trinity, 1890.

damage; they are yours only in charge. Your one bounden and irrevocable duty is to give account to Him for their faithful use.

Here, then, is the sphere of resistance to evil. Nothing can ever modify that plain obligation—evil may never be allowed an entry within the life. Nothing can justify the slackening of resistance here, nothing can excuse a compromise. Here is no room for discussion, for parleying, for tolerance. No; resist, fighting unto blood, take the whole armour of God, take everything, every weapon on which you can lay your hands, every defence by which you can insure resistance,—shield, and breastplate, helmet, sword, and spear; fight the good fight, wrestle, endure, prevail. Here, in this resolute resistance, lies the first necessity of life—of all life, not ours only, for this is the secret of the resistance to evil, which is the work of God Himself. God could not be God if His resistance to evil was not absolute, unqualified, and relentless. And this resistance of His it is which appears in that war which is in heaven, when Michael and his angels fight against the devil and his angels, and prevail and cast them out. This is the resistance of which He is the chieftain who rides out on a white horse, with the sword going forth from His mouth, who in righteousness doth judge and make war, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, who treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, whose name is the Word of God, King of kings, and Lord of lords.

That awful picture of the resistance to evil is one which He Himself carries out, who sat on the mount and gave the word: "Resist not evil." God in that war repudiates and extrudes the evil which has penetrated within His own Heaven, and has touched His own Divine responsibility. He must clear His name from all that has obscured it; and this He must do, not out of vengeance, not out of anger, not out of selfishness, not out of pride, but simply and solely out of the inherent energy of personal responsibility, which, at all costs, must preserve its

vitality, and therefore must expel, repudiate, reject, destroy everything that would lower that vitality or corrupt that personal life. Holiness, which is God's innermost law of life, cannot be what it is, and not set itself to uproot, and cancel, and beat down all evil; and that which we know as the last judgment is the great act by which God's personal self-responsibility effects the necessary and absolute expulsion of the evil, whose neighbourhood, whose insertion within His domain, He can only afford in His mercy to tolerate now, just because that day of final repudiation is already decreed and foreseen. Far from His present tolerance—by virtue of which He sends His rain on the unjust as well as the just, and leaves the tares to grow among the wheat—far from this being at variance with His final Judgment, far from this offering a plea or a suggestion that at the last that uttermost decision shall not be carried out, it is only possible because of the proposed day of separation. It is in anticipation of the final resistance to evil that God can contrive in a measure not to resist it now. That repudiation, that expulsion, are necessary to His present toleration. The two modes of action, which look so opposite, belong to one another—His mercy now rests for its base on His justice hereafter; that God who has mercy must be a God who utterly and wholly casts evil from out of His own responsibility. There could be no God capable of mercy if He did not secure the purity of His own self-existence.

Justice, then, which is the repudiation and expulsion of evil from within, is the prime and unalterable necessity of life. Here is the sphere in which resistance to evil is our first law, which nothing can annul. And let us be sure of it, it is not selfishness, not private self-regard, that comes into play as the motive that prompts us to acts of self-protection. And this for two reasons. First, the ground taken is that our existence as children of God lays us under a responsibility to Him for the preservation of His image. We hold it in trust, and we are false to that trust if we let the enemies of God into possession of any of it. Our

loyalty, our chivalry, our birth—these are the motive causes which enable us to throw into the very act of self-defence everything that is most unselfish and most sacrificial. The justice by which we demand ourselves a right to expel from out of our life all that corrupts, encumbers, or defeats it, is itself the outcome of that love by which we dedicate ourselves, we surrender ourselves to the absolute service and honour of Him who has made us for Himself, and who has bought us with a price. And then, again, such acts of self-defence are not selfish, inasmuch as the assertion and the preservation of the self in its freedom, in its essential vitality, is the primary condition of all unselfishness. We cannot be unselfish without possessing a self which can subdue and surrender itself. The act of self-sacrifice draws on all the powers of this self in its highest form, and only, therefore, by possessing these powers in their full force can the effort itself be made. According to the measure of the force of the self is the sublimity and purity of the sacrifice. And thus every act of self-sacrifice is an appeal to the self to exert itself in its highest intensity, and no such act will be possible to a self that has admitted within its proper domain that which damages, or weakens, or paralyses it. The self must be in possession of its own endowments if it is ever to achieve its lofty tasks; only so will it stand the strain. This is why self-preservation lies at the root of the very law of love, out of which sacrifice issues unto act. This is why no soul can ever be asked to do evil for the sake of another's good, why, at all costs, it must refuse such an act of sacrifice as would sully its own life, for it would be ruining the very organ of sacrifice in lowering the level of its own life. Whenever it is right—as at some rare and momentous crisis it may be—to do that on another's behalf which seems to break the moral law, as when John Inglesant lies to save his king's honour, at the cost of his own life, which the truth would save, the justification must be sought in the plea that such a breach did not involve a moral lapse, did not lower the moral level of the soul's purity. The man can be

asked to lose his earthly life for another, but never to lose his own soul, in our modern sense, never to definitely weaken his own self-existence; for he is responsible for the preservation of the organ and the instrument through which alone permanent sacrifice can become possible. And herein, surely, is the flaw which vitiates all those conceptions of self-annihilation which float down to us mostly through the meditating influence of the Buddha. They have all got tangled in this mazy confusion which ensnares, the theories which find the essence of sacrifice to lie in the abolishment of self. Thus the very highest moral act becomes an act of suicide, for in the abolishing, in the destruction, of self, it kills the root whence sacrifice springs, it cuts short all further opportunities of sacrifice, it makes the sacrifice cease in the very act by which it reaches its consummation. This is the suicide of sacrifice. Sacrifice, if it is to be the law of life, must retain in existence the life which it devotes and crowns. To secure its own continuance it must assert the continuance of the self, the self which can alone minister as a priest at this high altar. To destroy that self is to rob the altar of priest and victim at once. Nay, the self must be in vigour to do sacrifice at all, and the sacrifice itself being, as it is, the highest exercise of self-activity, must yet further fortify that vigour, must brace it to new possibilities of exertion, so that it is by virtue of its own sacrificial deed that it is made more ready to repeat its service.

The self, then, is not in conflict with the law of love in demanding self-preservation, if it do so out of the sheer force of its inward responsibility, by which it is bound to keep the trust committed to it, for the honour of God who gave it, for the service of man to whom it owes its sacrificial use. And is not this the justification of those laws of justice to which we make appeal in the building up of society? These laws begin by asserting, according to their measure, the recognition by the community of the sanctity of each one of its component members. They shield and guard in proportion to their rightness, the free

development, within the corporate body of each living soul; they clear for it its proper ground in which to grow; they encompass it about with defensible rights; they ward off villainous attacks from it, and cruelties that stifle and slay. Yes, but then this does not imply that their active benefit and aim are over in so setting free each individual life. It does not follow that justice is satisfied because each individual can do what he chooses without let or hindrance, so long as he keeps to himself and damages no other life. This freeing of the individual from peril and injustice was no doubt its first duty, because it is the first condition of a noble and self-sacrificing life. But the social laws are still concerned with the fruit of good living which was to issue from this individual freedom; they are still concerned in winning the harvest back, for the common good of all the seeds thus carefully sown and watered. The individual must be freed, but it is for the sake of the better work he will do for the community. The right of the individual to the possession of his own free development must be asserted, but it is in the confidence of that self-sacrifice in which alone freedom can consummate itself. True, it is much more obvious and easy and possible to secure by way of direct legislation the free exercise of the individual self against external burglarious attack than it is to insist by law on its willing self-sacrifice. This flower is more delicate than the root whence it springs, and the handling of law is perilously rough, no doubt, for its sensitive beauty. The region in which positive legislation runs most risk of blunder is that of justice, and therefore it is so apt to cling to this police function, which it fairly understands, and in the assertion of which lies its first obligation, rather than to venture out on the finer operations which are necessary if it undertakes to force by Act of Parliament the duties of love. This is natural enough, and many may even think that law had better confine itself, for fear of risk, to this earlier and negative stage of securing the individual citizen against oppression or danger. But, even so, if it were possible—which it most cer-

tainly is not—for law to confine itself to those limits, still law would not rest on a different basis from morality; still its protection of the individual would justify itself as a preliminary step to his voluntary usefulness to the whole body; still the assertion of justice on his behalf would look for its ultimate fruit in self-surrender through the impelling power of love, which law is unable to beget. It would have asserted justice to make further exercise of love possible. It would secure this by legal protection in order that the self might go beyond the legal necessities, using them only as a vantage ground from which it may start on its career of dedication to social brotherhood. To go beyond the obligations of law,—that is its final aim. And this carries us back to our Lord's sermon, for this is just what our Lord demands of us, as He declares that in making this demand He does not traverse or annul law, but only completes it, He does not destroy but fulfils it. He takes up the dictates of justice and declares them very good: only they are not the final position to be reached; they do not express the ultimate condition of the perfect moral temper. They are good, but they can be exceeded. The human will has done something when it has struggled up so far as is required of it by the calm, austere, impartial voice of equity,—"eye for eye, tooth for tooth." The absolute recognition of personal equality in the eye of the law, the indefeasible sanctity of the individual existence as such, the shield thrown over each separate self, high or low, rich or poor, by Divine justice, the resolute resistance to all evil which tends to break down, or undermine, or ignore, or cancel, the right of free individual life,—this comes first, and this is something,—nay, this is much. It was said by them of old time, under the express authority and sanction of God, the great good judge of all the earth, God—who is no respecter of persons, who holds the equal balance, "who will by no means clear the guilty," however strong, or rich, or violent. The human will advances under this discipline into the voluntary recognition of equal rights, and equal duties, and

the free acknowledgment of the worth in God's eyes of all human souls and bodies. So far, so good. But the human will cannot arrest itself at this point, as if it had touched the moral goal. It has yet further to go, away and beyond what strict equity can require of it; it must yet exceed, our Lord says, this type of righteousness. Jesus Christ will open out to it a moral ideal that goes higher than this. First, to learn the duty of resistance to all evil within; and then, with this obligation apprehended, with the inner life thus secured and established, with the will thus upgrown and developed, and purged and disciplined, with the inward conscience made strong against all inward peril, let it look out and abroad for a fresh task, for a new lesson,—a task more Godlike, a lesson that draws far nearer to the innermost mind of our Father which is in heaven.

Now we are ready, we are fit for the nobler service. Now resist *not* evil; now that you can afford the risk, now that you are too strong to let evil enter, now resist it not. This is the higher way. All that evil outside attacks you, but cannot find a place in you, all the spite, that hates but cannot hurt you, all the violence that threatens but cannot overpower you, all the sin that takes advantage of your good-heartedness to wring from you kind service, all the worldly wickedness that prowls about you to try and break down your temper, your patience, your forgiveness,—all this that is powerless to damage you, and against which you are inwardly secure, it is your office now to win to God, to overcome, to tame, to appease, to master, and bring under Christ's footstool.

And the way to win it, what is it? Why, the Divine way: not to resist it, but to yield to it; to do more on its behalf than ever it schemed to get out of you for its own benefit. If it compel you to go one mile, then go with it twain; if it thought to wring out of you some kindness, to take advantage of your Christian friendliness, of your humility, of your charity, well, your part is to surpass its expectation, to outdo its hopes, to suffer more for it, to take far more trouble for its good, than it

had ever ventured voluntarily to claim. If it presume to trespass upon your time and your patience, then spend more time and yet more patience in securing its best interests. If it take your coat, give it "your cloke also." That is the way to win all evil, to baffle it, to confuse it, to force it to succumb. Yield to it, and you conquer. That was the way of Jesus, that was His experience, that was His victory; and therefore, whenever this way is open to you, whenever the preservation of holiness does not forbid it, whenever the assertion of righteousness can afford it, whenever there is any hope of doing good by this road, whenever it does not conflict with the obligations of self-responsibility, whenever it is consistent with the interests of eternal justice and with the moral welfare of mankind at large, whenever—in short—it is possible at all, then the citizens of CHRIST'S kingdom must be absolutely willing to tread the same path, willing to conquer evil, not by resisting it, but by surrendering to its demands, by unlimited forgiveness, by inexhaustible concessions. That is the ethical climax, that is the better way. And, since the door has once been thrown open by the LORD, since CHRIST has set the standard, therefore it is never more possible for the human conscience to satisfy itself that it has done all, when once it has met all the claims which can in equity be made upon it. That satisfaction was perhaps possible under the older Covenant. The Jew who had done all that justice required, who had fulfilled all the necessary obligations, might possibly rest content, but never the Christian. He has only half done when he has done that. He must get beyond and watch for a higher opportunity. He has yet to look round and ask: "What is there which I am not required to do, which is yet undone? Is there anything I yet could do on behalf of those who have no right to expect it, who have indeed forfeited all their claim upon me?" That is what we are bound to be ever asking, and, if such a case is brought before us, if the affairs of life throw it in our way, we cannot refuse, we cannot say, "That deserves nothing from me, that

has lost its right to call upon me." If it be really true that we can succour or do good, then we may not protest that the claimant has already wronged us, or has hated us, or has been false or base or spiteful. These facts may throw doubt on the possibility of successfully succouring him, but they cannot be Christian reasons against helping where it is clear the help is possible. CHRIST has for ever cancelled and barred this one reason against doing our best for a man,—the reason that he has wronged us, that he is our enemy. Such a reason is no reason at all; it does not count, it is forbidden us; we may not even discuss it; it has been blotted out; CHRIST does not know it. We must find some other argument than that, if we are to justify ourselves at His bar for doing nothing on that man's behalf.

Dear brethren, we talk very often of the impractibility of these counsels of the Sermon on the Mount, of the impossibility of carrying life along in obedience to them: and yet surely there are more openings than we think in which we might very well put them in practice in a way that would make life move along with far greater smoothness and far more force. For indeed, how life is incumbered still with quarrels and with hates! What a strange amount of unforgiveness we come across as we get behind the scenes! What a surprising bitterness of heart at wrongs done! How old grudges are nursed with a dark and wearisome persistance! What blind obstinate refusals to conciliate we meet with, even among those who seem kind and Christian! How fast men and women cling to their rights! How rigidly they demand that others should do to them as they do unto others! This seems to them their final moral gospel. All life, they seem to think, is to be a give and a take, and so long as they fulfil their half of the bargain, they have done all that could possibly be asked of them. "What more could men expect?" they inquire. Do we not all know that kind of thing? How common it is! And do we not all know well all the wounds and sores and heart-burnings and jealousies

that it is used to account for! Oh! believe me, the maxim "Resist not evil" is very practical and very applicable. It is just this sort of thing which it absolutely bars. The life that pleads for itself on those grounds is below the level of CHRIST'S demands. It has failed utterly to understand what He meant when He said: "Resist not evil: win it over by yielding to it; if it take thy coat, give it thy cloke also." Ah! dear brethren, perhaps, if we were a little more loyal in resisting evil within, we should be a little more ready to act in the way of not resisting it without. The secret of our resistance to it when we ought to surrender is that we have yielded to it when we ought to resist. The love that is strong enough to forgive, and to yield, and submit—if by this way it can hope at all to win any evil over—is a love that can spring from nothing except a root of inward justice, a justice that austerely wars to the death against the inroad of evil, a justice that, with its own moral life, never surrenders, never submits, never admits excuses, never forgives itself, in the spirit of Him Who was able to save others because He did not save Himself.

THE QUEST FOR THE GOOD.[1]

"Why askest thou Me concerning that which is good? One there is who is good: but if thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments."—ST. MATT. xix. 17. [Revised Version.]

So stands the reading in St. Matthew's Gospel, and it would seem that our Lord, in taking up this eager questioner, the ruler who had come running, and kneeling, and asking, "Good Master, what shall I do?"—that our Lord, in answering him, gave him a double challenge to explain himself. He chal-

[1] Preached in St. Paul's Cathedral, on Sunday afternoon, September 22nd, being the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity, 1889.

lenged him to say on what grounds he called Him "Good," and He challenged him also to say on what grounds he attributed to our Lord that special and peculiar knowledge of the good in which he, the young ruler, did not share. The two points are in close accord, and the speaker, it would seem, in using the word, "good," twice over in his question, showed how nearly allied they were: "Good Master, what good thing shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He supposes our Lord to possess some unique knowledge about the good, and such unique knowledge rests on the possibility of His being uniquely good. Because He is so good, therefore He surely knows what is good. And thus the counter-challenge of the Lord deals with one and the same question, whether He take it up at one point or the other, whether He begin with the more immediate question, "Why askest thou Me concerning the good?" or whether it end with the deeper inquiry, "Why callest thou Me good?" In both forms, but more especially in the first, which we are to consider to-day, He refuses to accept this easy assumption of the young man, that He, the Good Teacher, has a particular receipt for being good and for winning eternal life. "Why askest thou Me concerning the good?" The good,—it is no private possession of any teacher; it is useless to run to this man or to that in the hope of discovering some secret which will secure the prize. Here is, indeed, the temptation of the Rabbis, the temptation to pose as those who had a peculiar personal insight into what was wanted, as those who could initiate you, if you would sit at their feet, into the hidden mystery which they alone had succeeded in unravelling, and which aspired to have a better method, a clearer definition, a sharper epigram, a surer answer than anybody else. And these authoritative utterances were pitted one against the other, and each school fought for its own favourite Rabbi's watchword; and here, therefore, thought the young man, when he heard of the Great Teacher who was drawing crowds to listen to Him, here is a new candidate for glory in this intellectual fray; He,

too, no doubt, if He aspires to honour in this arena, has a solution to propound of the riddle of life which no one else has yet given. And so he hurries off, running and kneeling, to challenge Him with some typical problem which he hotly desires to hear handled. And he is in earnest, this young fellow. His intellectual interest in the question is made keen by a practical and rigorous conscience. The definition of the good which he presses for is to determine his own ethical conduct; only the definition must be an original one, something adequate to the reputation of the Rabbi, something more than he, the ruler, has yet come across, something that will kindle him into action by its entrancing cleverness, something fresh, and special, and startling, worthy to repay the haste with which he has run to hear. "Good Master, what do You say is the good thing to do if I want to inherit eternal life?"

"Why askest thou Me concerning the good?" The sound of our Lord's answer can hardly fail to carry our thoughts rather far afield. The words seem to have in them an echo of that interminable problem which had so deeply moved other hearts, far away from that Jewish crowd, in the olive groves of Athens. The good—that had been the subject of such anxious questionings ever since Socrates had recalled Hellenic thought from physical speculation to ethical inquiry. It had been the one passion of young and eager brains to demand of each philosopher in turn what was his definition of the good. "What is the good of man, the supreme and absolute end which he and all things serve? Tell us how can we shape it into words? What is your view, your original answer to that importunate question?" So they asked ever and again. Nor can we fail to notice the likeness between our Lord's counter-inquiry to His questioner and that proverbial rebuff with which Socrates challenged the courage of his youthful inquirers. He, too, in his own way, met them first with the question, "Why askest thou me concerning the good?" "Why ask me?" he would always say; "you come as if I had some speciality in

the matter, as if I were a quack doctor with some brand-new infallible receipt, as if I could hand over to you the answer as you might hand a parcel over the counter in a shop; but if my answer be one that I had invented, if it were a peculiarity of mine, it could not be the true one"—so he would say—"for the good is universal, it is in us all, it is the common property of all alike; I know no more about it than you. The only true definition of it is that which each and every man must find himself giving as soon as he takes the proper pains to look into his own mind and see what is there." So Socrates was ever throwing men back, back on themselves, away from the authority of the famous teacher, away from himself. "Why ask me? Ask yourselves. Look within. What do you mean when you use the word 'good'? You could not use it if you did not know something of it. Down deep in your own heart you each know what you mean, and out of that, your own inner experience, must proceed your knowledge of it. You must define it for yourselves. The teacher can spare you no trouble, for the words of the definition can only win meaning from out of your own living consciousness." So, in his own brave way, Socrates did as our Lord when He threw the young man back on himself, "Why askest thou Me? If thou wouldest enter into eternal life, keep the commandments."

But, then, what a contrast, too, as well as a likeness! In the case of the Greek, however much he declared that all men might know who examined themselves aright, yet as the nature of this examination disclosed itself, it became evident how few, how very few, could ever attempt it. "Know thyself!" Yes, indeed; but such knowledge is very difficult. It involved sifting out the one universal meaning of a name which underlay all its varied uses, and ever as you attempted this or that definition, Socrates would discover for you some instance which it would not fit, and you were driven back and back, and ever the task grew more and more complicated, and ever it demanded a yet subtler exercise of the faculties engaged, and

the ring got smaller and smaller of those who had capacity and energy to pursue the speculative quest. And each inquiry into one's own private good involved ever deeper considerations of the general good in which the private good was intertwined. And that general good again showed itself more and more to be identical with the absolute good of all things, so that it was impossible to define the lesser individual good which you sought without arriving at the necessity of defining that perfect and real end, for which and by which the entire sum of things existed, that good which justified all that is, and which is one, and unchanging, and undivided, and eternal. And who can succeed in defining this? Who has the intellectual gift, or the courage, to last out the search, or the leisure in which to devote himself to it? Who, indeed! and yet without this uttermost and complete knowledge of the absolute good no one can be said to know—except by hearsay, by vague unreasoned opinion which the philosopher despised—what his own good is. Alas! this is rather a despairing receipt, this simple "know thyself, if thou wouldest know the good." Why, the philosopher himself, the highest type of intellectual genius, never succeeded in quite arriving at the definition of "the good," even for himself, and still less could he ever convey to others that uncertain vision of it which he now and again, at his very best moments, seemed just to catch sight of. How pathetic, even to tears, is the famous passage in Plato's *Republic*, where he at last arrives at the crisis where he must attempt to explain what the good is! Round him press his eager band of youthful friends, all athirst for the information. They are the few elect, favourite pupils. They had been purged of false knowledge already by long years of training; they had been carefully prepared by Plato himself, and disciplined; and now, in this discussion, recorded in the *Republic*, they have been led along, step by step, drawn, and fascinated, and enkindled.

Beginning with the demand, "Is there any moral good at all? has society any moral basis whatever?" they had seen that it

is impossible for any three or four men to combine in any concerted act at all without resting on a moral principle, without assuming the good. And so they had seen the entire city of men build itself up on this assumption, and therefore they have recognised that this involved some supreme man in the state, or men, who knew what this root-assumption is. And now they press round the speaker, and the crisis is reached. He must know and answer what is this moral assumption, this without which there is no human society. And Glaucon, the favourite pupil of all, the pupil in whom the vigour of the soldier and the emotion of the lover have been refined and transfigured to become the enduring passion for intellectual knowledge, he is the most eager of all now that the goal is in sight. "I wish you would tell me," he bursts in, "whether you can conceive this supreme principle of the good to be knowledge, or pleasure, or different from either." And Socrates banters him, and puts him off. And he renews his appeal. "You have no right, Socrates, never to tell your own opinion after having passed a lifetime in the study of philosophy." And still Socrates holds off. And he becomes yet more vehement. "I must implore you, Socrates," he cries, "I must implore you not to turn away just as you are reaching the goal. If you will only give such an explanation of the good as you have already given of justice, or of temperance, it will satisfy us." So he pleads, but it cannot be. Socrates puts him off. "I cannot help fearing," he answers, "that I shall fail, and in my zeal make a fool of myself. No, dear man, let us not at present ask what is the actual nature of the good, for to reach what is now in my thoughts about it is too much for me in my present mood." And he offers to give them, in place of the true definition, a symbol, some allegories of what he means. Wonderful things indeed these symbols of his suggest, as they hint at this supreme, rational, and moral unity which transcends all knowledge and all being. But, once again, when he has arrived at a conception of the in-

tellectual process which is necessary to apprehend this good, and the young men clamour again for him to describe it to them, to describe, as they say, "this path which shall lead us to our final rest," they are told that it is impossible for them to understand. "Dear Glaucon," says Socrates, "dear Glaucon, you would not be able to follow me even if I were to do my very best." Not able to follow him! But if the trained and ripened disciple, the most gifted of all, could not follow him, who else has a chance of understanding what this supreme good is? Here is the moment at which Greek philosophy shows at once its strength and its impotence—so brimming with high promise, so infinite in its suggestiveness, so admirable in its training, so exquisite in the perception of the task set before it, of the problem that it had to solve; and just when we bend breathlessly around to receive the last word which will explain all, then there is the failure, the lapse, the silence. Not even the select knot of the initiated can follow the perilous delicacies of the philosophic movement:—"Dear Glaucon, you would not be able to follow me, even if I were to do my best." And to those wide, wide masses outside—what of them? What to them this faint speculative suggestion of a dream which Plato himself, after a lifetime spent in philosophy, cannot trust himself to define in words? Here, indeed, is the ring-fence of the expert, drawn to its very narrowest.

And what is the most salient, the sharpest point, of contrast which signalizes our Lord's answer to this youthful ruler—the contrast that goes to the very bottom of the problem, expresses itself in so minute a change on the surface of the language, just in the change from the neuter to the masculine? To Plato, the ideal towards which the passionate intellect presses, is always the good thing—that one ultimate good thing which would, if rightly apprehended, account for, and justify the existence of all the sum of things, the final and adequate cause for which, and in which, they are made good. But our Lord can allow nothing to be morally or inherently good. The one

and only good is the goodwill, and the supreme, ultimate good, the final and efficient cause of all good in the world, can only be the goodwill of the supreme and only Personality. There is only one Being who is good, and that is God. That is His answer. God is the good, out of whom the world's existence is accounted for, towards whom the whole creation moves and aspires. All good is an outcome and expression of Him who is the Good.

Now the difference brought out by this introduction of the personal element is immeasurable. Good is now no remote motive ideal which only the purified and cultivated reason can hope even faintly to apprehend. It is a living will, the will of One who is a Father to us all, whose life is in us, whose love is on us, who is attached to us by all that is nearest and dearest. Such a will does not hold itself far aloof in eternal isolation, but reaches into every nook and corner of our being; for everything in us that exists truly is God's own, and He is Himself the Good. It is not then in heaven, that we should have to climb up there to find it, nor is it in the depth beneath, that we should have to descend thither to discover it; but it is close to every one of us, on our lips, and in our hearts. We touch it, we breathe it, we feel it, one and all; for it is common to all, since to all it is a Father, and all are its own children. It is not uplifted and solitary as the ideal good of the philosopher, afraid to lower its perfection by mixture with inferior matter. Nay, for this will is a will of love, and love of its very nature delights to condescend, to stoop, to empty itself, to humiliate itself; it delights in sacrifice—the high for the low, the rich for the poor, the happy for the unhappy, the glorious for the base. This is its very joy; this is its fulfilment. In sacrifice of self it makes manifest its love, and love is this goodness. The more it loves, the more ready it is to stoop, to serve, to surrender, and the more it loves the more good it is. This goodness, therefore, finds its fullest revelation in condescension, and hence He

who is alone the Good does not hold Himself back to the privileged circle of those who are most worthy, but flows out far and wide, opening Himself to all, even the most remote, seeking for all, even the most stubborn and contemptible, going out into the highway and hedge, and compelling them, by patient, enduring persuasion, by entreaty, by pressure, by the cords of an insistant love,—compelling them, good and bad alike, to come into the gladness of His house, to the splendour of His own eternal marriage feast. Everywhere, to every one, this will of God draws nigh, and draws nigh not with some accidental and shadowy reflection of itself, but in that very character which is its deepest and most real essence for its very essence, as the good, lies in its moral goodness. And it is just here, in this moral will, that God the Almighty presents Himself to the touch of every man, and closes with him, if he suffers it, and fuses Himself with his will, so that the human will, too, can be made good, good with that very goodness which constitutes the goodness of God. He, the man, becomes good; and yet there is but one Good, who is God. For, indeed, it is God's own goodwill, which not only offers itself to the man's partaking from without, but also from deep within the core of human life itself is at work to build up within him that goodwill by the force of which He can close with the outward invitation, and can lay hold of the moral law, and can surrender himself to the moral call. His own will wins its goodness out of the goodwill of God, which invigorates and feeds and sustains it; so it still remains true that it is not he, the man, who is good, for there is only One that is good, even God. So nigh to us is this supreme goodness—itself the living ground of our every-day life, this will of God, upholding the universe and yet revealing itself in its absolute ethical character within the secret places of every human heart which will consent to hold communion with it, so nigh is it at this moment to you and to me, each of us may know it, each for himself.

And how know it? How hold communion with it? Turn and listen to the simple universal rule given by our Lord—the rule which all can understand, and all can accept: "Keep the commandments." If you would enter into life, if you would know the good, you need not hurry about the world after this rabbi and that. You need not hunt up the secret in the baffling mazes of wrangling philosophies; you need not run to and fro, and waste yourself with trouble and anxiety, in terror lest you should have missed the true receipt, or taken the wrong turning; you need not lose yourself in endless disputes and inquiries. Nay, it is all perfectly plain how it is to be done. No royal road peculiar to the privileged, no doubt about it which can entitle you to defer it till to-morrow. Why ask concerning the good, as if it were a curious riddle which lacked an answer? If thou wouldest enter into life, there is one receipt, and that is open to you, and to all: "Keep the commandments."

The commandments! they are the points at which the will of man closes with the will of God; they are the moments at which this fusion occurs. The commandments express the very nature and character which constitute the innermost goodness of Him who is the only Good, and in keeping them we come into touch with Him, we are made one with Him. They embody the temper in which communion takes place. Whenever we learn to keep a commandment, then our will is as God's will, and we and the good are become one. And these commandments, they are not obscure or uncertain. Nay, we all know them, we all have them in our hands; no one need inquire of Jesus further about them. If you say unto Him, with the ruler, "Which?" He turns you back to that which you perfectly know. Jesus saith, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother, Love thy neighbour as thyself." There it all is; no difficulty in knowing that, anyhow. At all those point

God can be felt, the will of God can be experienced, and that will is the supreme good.

My brethren, we are ever puzzling ourselves over the ultimate problem of existence: "What is the end? What is to be the justification of it? What is it makes life worth living? What is the good after which men strive? How should we define it? how should we exactly define that particular form of good which our own life should seek to attain? Have we any clear conception of it, and, if not, who shall be our master? to which school shall we give the preference?" The Utilitarian all but commends itself one day, and the next day we read an article which inclines us to adopt the Idealist standard; and we hesitate, and we hover, and we never begin in earnest, and the only positive conclusion that we seem to reach, is that it is very difficult to arrive at any conclusion at all. And all this effort of ours may be true and genuine enough. The Lord loved the young man who came burning with the problem to be solved, "Good Master, what good thing ought I to do?" And yet for us, as for him, there is all the time perhaps just one thing needed, just to take up the commandments, and begin seriously to obey them, to begin to-day, not to-morrow—that is the Lord's counsel. Why go on asking, as if you did not know quite enough of the good thing you are required to do here, and now? If you would know the good, you all have alike the power to do it. Set your will to the will of God, bend it to His moral service, lay it alongside of His law, the plain, strong, undeviating demands of the moral law. Here, in moral goodness, the aim of life is attained. It is given worth, dignity, and freedom; in becoming good it becomes here and now a thing with a purpose, it receives its fulfilment. Do we not find it so? In rare moments, when we succeed in keeping a commandment, do we not feel that in achieving a morally good act the dark veil that hangs over the final issues of earthly existence is lifted, and our life is known to be a thing worth having, its purpose is realized, its motions are satisfied,

its aspirations are verified, and we no longer are burdened with fretful questions: "What becomes of it all? what is the use? what does it all lead to?" In being good, in keeping the commandments, we have touched the goal, and we feel the peace of a final resting-place; for indeed we have by that entered within the secret, we are taken up into that goodwill, that goodwill of God, which will at last approve itself as the only and ultimate justification of all that is, or has been, or ever will be. "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments."

Is there any soul here free, and dauntless, and true-hearted, who can yet venture to rejoin, with the young ruler, "All these things I have kept from my youth up"? Then do not let him or her be afraid to say so to the Lord who loved the young man who so answered. Only do not be afraid either if the Lord in your answer sees His opportunity, recognises in you a prize, one whom He may summon to His more perfect service. Do not be afraid if then the Lord says, "Faithful in little, be faithful in much; come up higher, for thou art worthy of these things." You have already done but little for God; never stop there; there must ever be a forward movement; and it is in recognition of your efforts to keep all the commandments that you begin to hear a whisper within your soul that disturbs you with agitating suggestions, that shakes you now and again with sudden invocations, a whisper that keeps saying to you, "Not enough, yet something you lack; go closer to Christ; something special, something heroic, is possible for you in His service; Christ asks, to-day as of old, for special, for adventurous effort—it may be yours to make this clear." If such a whisper stir within you, listen to it, for it is the voice of Him who, though He began by refusing any unique claim to be good, yet dares to offer Himself as a sufficient end and aim to the highest human endeavour; it is the voice in you of Him who said of old, "Sell all that thou hast, then, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me."

But with most of us it will be quite another rejoinder that we shall have to make to this demand: "If thou wouldest enter into life, keep the commandments." "Keep them? Ah! yes, if only I could! If only I had the moral courage and the heart, but that is just what I most miserably lack. I have tried, and I cannot. 'Do not commit adultery; love thy neighbour as thyself!' If this must be done in order to enter into life, then I am lost,—I can never enter in, and the word of the Master is to me a word of despair." My brother, if such be your inner answer, then the same voice which whispers to your happier comrade, "Come and follow Me," has a whisper also for you, a whisper which ever invites, "Come unto Me, come, all weary and heavy laden; I will give you this rest, I will give it to you." So bold is He, this Rabbi, who put off at first your personal appeal to Him; now, when you really know your need, it is only Himself which He offers you. "I will give you rest; I will forgive you your sin; I lay My hand on you and heal you; I am come to seek and save those who, like you, feel this loss; I am come that you may have this moral life which you so lack, and may have it abundantly. Come unto Me, follow Me." That is one sufficient answer both to them who have that they may have more, and to those who have not that they may regain what they have lost. "Come unto Me, follow Me; I am the Good that you desire, I am the Good that you lack. True, there is but One who is good; but he who hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and he who receiveth Me receiveth My Father also."

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